Thinking with the Yajurveda

GANDABHAI G. DESAI

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By the same author

QUINTESSENCE OF THE UPANIṢADS
GĪTAÑJALI—ANUGAN

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TO
MAHARṢI RAMANA OF ARUṆĀCALAM
(Tiruvannamalai, South India)

Most reverentially and gratefully dedicated whose Hṛdaya-Vidya and grace have given me a spiritual dimension along which to rise for perennial freedom.

Introduction

IT IS in the very nature of man not merely to reason and understand the structure of sensible things, utilising them for his well-being and progress, but also to delve beneath them and endeavour to obtain their metaphysical bearings. The world of science does help, but phenomena are held up there for investigation piecemeal and in isolation. This renders the search for a comprehensive and unified knowledge of things by science impossible.

The various departments of science indeed lay bare the various aspects of man, but he is more than their sum-total.[1] Physiology may account for his blood and bones and chemistry again for their chemical compounds. Physics may explain their atomic constitution and even think of the uncertain relations of electrons. Psychology may interpret our ideas, sensations and reflexes for us, as also psycho-analysis the impulsions of the unconscious mind. Biology may trace man to germ-cells and explain his animal evolution. Anthropology may exhaust his study as an animal and political economy and ethnology may know for certain his economic and racial aspects respectively. All these facts surely enrich the world with man's isolated phases in the mighty play of cosmic life, but indeed fail to reveal the depth of his personality. "Reality eludes touch." Logic and scientific laws certainly point to the immense possibilities of man's intelligence, but his fulness is never explored. It ever remains shrouded in the hazy mists of mystery. Hence man's mind naturally turns to metaphysics and to the ethical and religious philosophy of life.

Bergson's philosophy[2] of 'Elan vital' proposes to harmonise the relative divisions of Intuition and Intellect, and of Duration and Mathematical time in a ceaseless flow of Reality. Whitehead's philosophy[3] of 'Prehension' reveals the feeling that is one in the force of inanimate matter and in the emotion of a living organism. But the veil of bifurcation is never fully lifted up, though Whitehead's postulating a thing's 'subjective aim' or ' Individuality ' supplies, in varying measures, sympathy to one 'Occasion of experience' from all other such occasions, in the spatio-temporal flux, for the universe to evolve as one living organism.

The three differing conditions of man's consciousness in his wakeful state, dream and sleep are another such block that defies intelligent interpretation of their correlation and harmony in one infinite consciousness. The formula to evolve a link to bring them in a line is perhaps more difficult than postulating a 'something' that shatters the barrier between the living and the non-living in the universe. The oppression continues and man's soul gropes to obtain some ray that might illumine these dark avenues in one clear vision and reveal them as one in some immaculate, immanent Principle. It is, therefore, the eternal quest of a philosopher and a seer to know how ' Becomings ' and ' Being ' are co-ordinated.

The Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad gives us a picture of transcending consciousness[1] where all dualities and differences are dissolved. That transcending consciousness is represented as the fourth condition of the Soul (Turīya Pāda of Ātmā). The wakeful condition with its external objects, the dream condition with its internal, mental images and the sleep condition with its blind bliss of oblivion, containing the germ of the former two states, melt and pour out their different moulds in one stream, that does not recognise these different moulds, in that Turīya Pāda of Ātmā. Bergson thinks that Intellect makes cuts in the uniform stream of life and consciousness and shows the drama of the manifold. Whitehead feels that science makes such cuts in 'the seamless coat of the universe'. Intellect, then, is the denial of Intuition which alone, in Bergson's opinion, holds the key to arrive at undivided Reality. Even so, we have the Mathematical time of science with its successive moments which take stock of different phenomenal events passing in quick succession. This Mathematical time is again the denial of the Pulsing of Duration where time is uniformly one in the embrace of Reality or, as Gurudeva Tagore poetically puts it in Gītañjali, "Time is endless in thine hands, my lord. There is none to count thy minutes."

We see then that it is Intuition and the Pulsing of Duration, and not Intellect and the Mathematical time, that ensure us participation in the vital surge of life. This state that Bergson contemplates corresponds, to some extent, to the Turīya Pāda of Ātmā or Samādhi. The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad says that there is, in that Pāda, the non-dual, tranquil bliss of the soul, undisturbed by sight, sound, touch, taste or smell. No intercourse with the humdrum of life is possible in this all-absorbing experience which defies description. The blessed condition remains a sole sharer of the bliss of Brahman, in testimony of which no logical proof of direct or inferential nature is valid.

All controversial aspects of philosophy—whether matter originates from mind or mind from matter as epiphenomenon or whether both run parallel so that every event in the mind is co-existent with a similar event in matter under the wise direction of God—are subdued in that Turīya state ; for, it transcends phenomenal consciousness. The barriers between the individual life and the cosmic life fall away in that state. Here is the genuine experience of Self (Ātmā) which is the dearest possession of man or rather is man. The sage Yājñavalkya of Upaniṣadic renown, giving an exposition of immortal life to his philosophically inclined wife, Maitreyī, explains that what is dearest to the heart is held dear not on its own account, but for the love of Ātmā. Maitreyī is, therefore, advised to realise that immortal Ātmā. The sage goes even to the extent of saying that all the dear possessions disown the person who does not know Ātmā. This Ātmā, he says, is the Almighty Being whose breath indeed are all these Vedas and Upaniṣads (Asya mahataḥ bhūtasya niḥś vasitam).[5]

Āṭmā is spoken of by Yājñavalkya as the ground of all as the sea is of waters, in a different context. The billows of the sea break out in loud laughter and moan ; they rise and fall ; they change their forms. They are water all the same. Even so one uniform Ātmā, the sage says, is infinite consciousness in which nothing is lost (Sarvam ātmaivābhūt), but the merging is accompanied with the loss of the sense of difference and of distraction which results from that difference. The Upaniṣads declare this truth by saying that all this and all that are complete in themselves, and that only what is perfect can proceed from the perfect, leaving only the perfect as the remainder.[6] This almighty, all-intelligent and immanent Ātmā is, in their opinion, an internal witness of all hearts and rules them as an undisputed sovereign. Ātmā can never change Its infinite status with the modes of actions. It is a bridge —a link (Setu), as the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad instructs, between all differing worlds. Ātmā preserves and upholds creation. Those that would realise it, says the Upaniṣad, have a passion for sacrifice and are contrite. They no longer long for wealth and progeny and fame; for what are they to do with these trifles when Ātmā is all these and more and all? They become silent with the load of truth and the wide world is a holy field for their pilgrimage. None can locate that Ātmā and specify It. It is of the nature of non-extirpation (Anucchittidharmā). Death is Its food, and good and evil can never cross Its threshold.[7]

Surely no genuine sacrifice can possibly be made without obtaining this great experience of Ātmā; for, after that experience, sacrifice does not appear to be made for another but for self which includes fellows. It is explained as follows: " Then alien there is none, then no door is shut".[8] With the dawning of this spiritual sense in the person who has exerted well for its attainment, he knows the truth of God as Tagore reveals, "Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes".[9] His "illusions will burn into illumination of joy and desires ripen into fruits of love".[10] He never loses "the touch of the one in the play of the many"[11] thenceforward and has realised, as the Vedic Sarvamedhayājī[12] (worshipper of Brahman as all), that, despite his meanderings with manifold Yajñas in the pursuit of worldly ambitions and the paradise (Svarga), as impelled by Kāma (desire), he has profited at last by the inspiring Vedic lore to enter Ātmā and has obtained his spiritual welfare (S'reyaḥ) there, He has realised that the divine instruction has helped him cut short the long, cosmic thread (Ṛtasya tantuṁ vitataṁ vicṛtya) to restore his units with Brahman, who he was in timeless epochs (Tadapaśyaṭṭabhavaṭṭad adāsīt).

If the worship of the Yajurveda, then, finds its consummation only as the Sarvamedha Yajña, it is necessary to give the view of the Ṛṣis of Bhārata in regard to the age of the Vedas, which, they think, are eternal, in utter refutation of the view of some of the European scholars who assign them to a period of a few thousand years ago with the so-called beginning of the cultural age of humanity in the hoary past. Maharṣi Dayānanda Sarasvatī holds the view, shared by the Ṛṣis, that the Vedas are the immortal words of revelation of Paramātmā to man to guide him in his search for Truth. The Maharṣi cites the Mantra 7 of the S'. Y. S. A. 31 in his reputed book Ṛgvedādibhāṣyabhūmikā[13] to show that the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda and the holy Chandas like the Gāyatrī have all been revealed by the all-adored (Sarvahuṭaḥ) Pūrṇa Puruṣa (Yajñāt) or Parabrahma. He also cites the Mantra 20 of Anu. 4, Prapā. 23, Kān. 10 of the Atharvaveda in corroboration of this idea. The Atharvaveda Mantra poses a question, "Do you know the highest Support and Source (Skambhaṁ taṁ brūhi katamaḥ svideva saḥ) of the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Aṭharvaveda and the Sāmaveda ?" Maharṣi Dayānanda, in the exposition of that Mantra, says that there is no divinity other than the all-upholding Parameśvara who is the author of the Vedas (Tasmāt skambhāt sarvādhārāt Parameśvarāt pṛthak kaśchidapyanyo devo vedakartā naivāstīti mantavyam).

If some one questions the validity of this view and argues that the Ṛṣis on whose names the Vedic Mantras stand should be considered as their authors, the Maharṣi replies that it could not be so. The plea on which he refutes this argument is that even Brahmā, who had been brought into being before the process of creation proceeded in its immense sentient and insentient varieties, studied the Vedas, sent on to him by Paramātmā, through the agency of divine Agni, Vāyu, Ravi (Sun) and Aṅgirā. Maharṣi Dayānanda quotes the authority of the sages S'vetāśvatara and Manu on this point and concludes that, if even Brahmā obtained the Vedas in this manner, it would be wrong to say that the Ṛṣis who existed later could be their authors.[14]

Swāmī Dayānanda also enlightens us about the age of the modern world[15] with which the Vedas co-exist and puts it to 1,96,08,53,012 years. Six Manvantaras viz. Svāyambhuva, Svārociṣa, Auttami, Tāmasa, Raivata and Cākṣuṣa, he tells us, have already elapsed since the modern creation, which is at present passing through the seventh, Vaivasvata Manvantara, came into existence and it has still to pass through seven more Manvantaras. The Maharṣi counts the age of one Manvantara to be 30,67,20,000 years, which consists of seventy-one cycles of the Satya, the Tretā, the Dvāpara and the Kali Yugas, each one of the four Yugas of the cycle running for 17,28,000, 12,96,000, 8,64,000 and 4,32,000 years respectively one after another in an unbroken succession. We are told that the Kali Yuga is still to run its course for some 4,27,000 years and the Vaivasvata Manvantara for 18,61,87,000 years more. It would be interesting to note, in connection with this Vedic age of the earth, its age calculated geologically, which comes to some 2,000 million years; for both are approximately equal.

With these reflections, I conclude the introduction to my book *Thinking with the Yajurveda.* I have humbly tried to review in the book scientific and philosophical conclusions in regard to the constitution and the evolution of the universe with their bearings towards those of the Yajurveda according to the light permitted to me. I am greatly indebted to Maharṣi Dayānanda, to Vedamūrti Satavalekarji, to S'rī Aurobindo and especially to learned S'rī Ghoda, who have given me an insight in the interpretation of the Vedic Mantras through their scholarly works, and I am, therefore, deeply grateful to them. I very thankfully acknowledge, in the same manner, the assistance I have received from the works of the authors of great repute like Dr. C. E. M. Joad and Dr. E. W. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, for interpreting scientific and philosophical thought for me for enabling me to compare it with that of the Yajurveda.

It is indeed hard to unravel the mysterious treasure hidden in the Yajurveda. Who am I to try that impossible task when even mighty minds dimly contemplate and feebly express it? But believing that "it was only things of the spirit that could stand up to wrongs",[16] I have attempted, in my humble way, to bring out the spirit of the harmony of the Brahma (knowledge) and the Kṣatra (action) worships in the Yajurveda. And I think my effort will be amply compensated, if, in that act, a reader sees a plan, however faint, to help him appreciate that harmony and to make him feel that 'there was a power in him to discover the centre of freedom by which he could release himself from the plane of time and conquer time."[17]

And lastly a few words about the history of this book will not be out of place. A copy of the manuscript, once named *Heart of the Yajurveda,* was sent to revered Dr. S. Radhakrishnan for remarks. He very kindly looked through it and offered suggestions in regard to the change of title, elimination of certain aspects, re-integration and re-arrangement. I acknowledge with a deep feeling of gratitude the debt I owe to the illustrious philosopher and statesman for finding time to do this labour of love. My present book *Thinking with the Yajurveda* thus comes into being after my availing of those suggestions according to my humble ability. Aum.

GANDABHAI G. DESAI

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THINKING WITH THE YAJURVEDA

CHAPTER 1

The Vedic Agni and the Sacrificer; Agni's aspects

THE ANCIENT Āryan seers adored Agni and those that would propitiate Him are invited by the Yajurveda to worship Him with offerings belonging to this tree of the universe and butter of life; for they are the fittest means to worship this blazing Omniscience. Agni is ever powerful to envelop such adorers into His mighty embrace, symbolic of matter, ether and light. In the course of worship, light would enrich their sense of matter with resplendent all-hood, and set up matter as a great refuge on this earth in their passion for divine worship. Then would the luminary bodies attend on the adorers as father and the earth, as mother. What is respiration is explained as only Agni's prowess and it is then understood as such, animating the worshippers to witness the glory of the heavens. Hymns go out from their mouths in an effort to propitiate Him, for He touches them in moments of measurable time in His flight of transcendence. The seers of the Vedic Mantras enjoin on the devotee to pray to Agni and to the Sun as sacred light. Agni and the Sun conceivably symbolise the mighty refulgence of Brahman and are courted to grace the devotee's worship-place as his beloved friends, to accept his offerings and taste them. It is the conviction of the adorer that Agni hears his prayers from near and afar, and he knows that Agni is the crest of the heavens (mūrdhā divaḥ) and the refuge of the earth (Kakutpatiḥ pṛthivyāḥ) and nourishes the creative activity of waters (apām retānsi jinvati).

The Vedic Gārhapatya Agni, connected with the abode of man, is worshipped with the fullest knowledge that the

Āhavanīya Agni which passes sense-perceptions is latent in it and has entered it for bringing the boons of earthly life to man. Agni is, indeed, holds the Yajurveda, the marvellous upholder of the universe and His prowess is immeasurable. It is, therefore, natural that the devotee seeks material prosperity and noble intellectual light from Him (Sanim medhāmayāsiṣam swāhā). The sages of the Bhṛgu family lit up fire in forests for Agni-worship in ancient times in the fond hope that man may fully avail of the mercy of this suzerain Deity, matchless in honour and praise. If health, longevity and moral heights are longed for, Agni is besought by the adorer as the fittest power to bestow them on him after redeeming his discrepancies that stealthily thwart his objectives. He hopes to live the full measure of a hundred years' life in the love of Agni, getting his honourable share of wealth, food and dauntless might in his struggle for existence. Fully conscious of the dark night of atrophy before him, he prays to Agni to give him strength to go beyond it. The adorer knows that Agni fills the light of the Sun and is instinct in the hymns and offerings of the Ṛṣis; he, therefore, prays for His bounties in his life of a householder. He prays indeed for long life, strength, progeny and wealth. Agni's light radiates nourishment, strength and prosperity for him and Agni is, therefore, attended to in a prayerful attitude.

Agni is approached by the adorer in all humility with the knowledge that the refulgent protector of sacrifices is the very same Agni that leads the way to the highest Truth (Ṛta), and progresses in His own domain under none else's sway (vardhamāne sve dame). As the father is accessible to the son, so is Agni to the worshipper. He is besought to keep closest company for ensuring him and his fellows emancipating protection and secure place and prosperity. He is entreated to know and hear the worshipper's sincere prayer to keep him away from the influences of sin. Agni is confided in as the Law and the Master and invited to put him in the vein of intoxicated, divine ecstasy, in order that all his ailments may leave him; for the adorer does not want to breathe the contagion of a sinning thought and disease that is the lot of a spiritual miser.

The devotee seeks the irresistible cover of the refuge of Agni, functioning both as Friend (Mitra) and Chastiser (Varuṇa), for being guarded from the followers of sin who choose to haunt his path. He prays that the perennial light (Jyotirajasram) of Mother Aditi (the mother of gods), standing for endless prosperity, be guaranteed to him for living a life of unfading bloom. He prays in the strain of the ennobling Gāyatrī and meditates on the sin-cleaving, adorable light (Vareṇyaṁ bhargaḥ) of Agni as Sun (Savitā), to whom all wealth and light of the cosmos could be traced, for the attainment of supreme intelligence, (Dhiyaḥ pracodayāt). That intelligence, graciously granted, helps him pick up the blossoms of phenomenal existence and finally unites him in the fulness and freshness of the undecaying and omniscient life of supreme Brahman of perennial joy.

Agni is not only the giver of spiritual health, as the Gāyatrī demonstrates Him to be, but also of progeny, cattle, wealth, reputation, strength, comrades and nourishing food in His Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya and Dakṣiṇāgni forms. He is supplicated as such by the adorer for rendering glorious both his Being and his Becoming. He feels convinced that his heartfelt remembrance of Agni has destroyed his shortcomings. And with the worship of Agni alone, the omnipotent Brahman is eulogized by him as Tryambaka—as the controller of the phenomenal, the etherial and the radiation worlds, and supplicated to rend his hard fetters of birth and death; for his highest ambition is to be permanently secured in the perennial bliss of immortality. He feels that, only with the attainment of immortality, the consummation of the worship of Agni is reached, such as would make significant Tryambaka's attributes of being Sugandhi (fragrant) and Puṣṭivardhana (nourishing), so beautifully set forth by the Mahāmṛtyuñjaya Mantra; for S'iva (Good) is His great name. The highest station of Agni in the Yajurveda can be imagined with this import of the Mantras of Agni worship which the adorer conducts at the Agnihotra and the Cāturmāsya Ṛtu Yajña that constitute his Nitya Yajña—his obligatory form of the Vedic worship, as distinguished from his voluntary worship (the Kāmya Yajña).

The Vedic seer prays to Agni for the perfection of the conceptual power of the adorer, knowing that He can stimulate his mind into ever widening thought by inspiring him with austere renunciation, learning and culture over which He presides. Agni is said to be the knowledge of the Sattva, the Rajas and the Tamas categories and is conceived as sacrifice (Yajña) incarnate. The worshipper, therefore, approaches Him for the attainment of refined intellectual powers, which alone can render genuine happiness possible by granting him the illumination of genuine wakefulness in the desiring and dark modes of symbolic life. The Vedic worshipper would rather awake in the field of the true values of life, while weak mortals are asleep in the shroud of the dark night of infatuation. And with immortal Agni's benign assistance, the adorer reclaims the diseased functions of his mind and life, of his eye and his ear and is enabled to obtain security from the enticement of sin. All mortals are indebted to Agni, for, the Yajurveda instructs, He is the Keeper of the law of Karma in the cosmic sacrifice; and those that keep true to His noble mandates can claim protection from the infectious ravages of dark propensities and are gradually established into righteous conduct for awaking into the ennobling life of immortality.

It is only this life of immortality where no evil lingers and which is fully blessed in the opinion of the Yajurveda. Infinite prosperity awaits the traveller in that destination, if he has abided by the law of emancipating Agni. Such a person has already raised his piteous wail to Him to be gracious and has, consequently, earned eternal good after a disciplined course of sensuous gratification; for Agni would throw His very self into His adorer's for assuring him unswerving observance of His Law. And what is the conception of this self of Agni ? It is one of steel, silver and gold, vast and deep-merging, that carries satisfaction to gods and destroys the ponderous might of demons. Agni is thus conceived by the Yajurveda as a friend of persons who are wedded to the illumined modes of life, and a foe of those that cherish the dark ones. This earth then becomes a refuge to the good that propose to burn their evil with the adoration of Agni, and a giver of boons to them according to the law of Agni; for He is irresistible life, loving the good and exerting a steadying influence on those that want to evolve with the law of righteousness. Agni, in the very same mood, is declared by the seer as fathomless like an ocean pervading all the activities of creation. Birthless and, in a sense, one great protector holding the created worlds in one foot, while His three feet measure immortality (Pādosya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtam divi), He is considered by the Yajurveda to be the efficient cause of the universe. Agni, again, is the immortal word and sentinel helping the philosophically minded to the path of illumination (Devayāna) for reaching the immortal regions where death is finally conquered. In the context of this majesty of Agni, He is entreated to look upon the worshipper with the eyes of a friend that guard against the furies of phenomena.

Choked with grateful emotions, therefore, the Vedic thinker prays, "Oh Agni, you are the light of the universe and know all the ways of rendering true knowledge possible for us. Remove our dark sins. We make salutations to you again and again. Lead us on, oh kindly light, by an illumined path." The adorer too prays in that vein, as he knows full well that Agni can help him wade through the severest ordeals and, crushing the inimical opponents of the good, assure him endless spiritual nourishment and wealth. As the keeper of the law, Agni makes the observance of truth (Dikṣā) and penance (Tapa) possible for him in the opinion of the Yajurveda. He exists, as ruled by the highest Law, as the head of the luminaries, as an ever active harbinger of good for creatures on earth and as luminous omniscience to be worshipped by man. He is said to be ever steadied in Ṛta (the highest Truth). It is natural, then, that the worshipper should invite such a personality to taste of his vital fluids (Somarasa) and grant him strength to obtain the fruition of a house-holder's life by getting him a noble son. For both father and son would then resolve to acquire the light and power of Brahman (Brahmavarcas) with determined minds, working in strong bodily frames, and would pray for nourishing food and drink, for the company of learned friends and, above all, for the peace of mind, such as would attune them to that light and power.

It will be obvious to the reader with this representation that, even if a sacrifice in the form of fire-worship is undertaken by the Vedic worshipper with clarified butter (Ghṛta), herbs and grains (Samidh) to be offered in the fire, the final limits are not reached there. For there is a constant appeal to the luminous beings of light to sanctify and enrich the Yajña with the gift of their essential merits to the sacrificer. Again, Agni, Vāyu and Āditya, the presiding deities of such a sacrifice, are conceived by the Yajurveda as none else but the Hiraṇyagarbha or the highest Puruṣa, from whom the whole creation rises and who is not different from it. The Puruṣa is represented as having entered the cosmos in these three forms and as playing with the creation for His pleasure with His causal body consisting of sixteen elements. Agni as Hiraṇyagarbha is, therefore, begged to lead the adorer to Brahmavarcas (the power of Brahman).

The sacrifice (Yajña) is conceived also as permeating the etherial worlds, the worlds of the luminaries and those of matter and as bringing their wealth for the Vedic sacrificer. This conception of the Yajurveda is indeed majestic, for it proves that the sacrificer is not concerned only with the materialistic modes, but wants to spread away his personality in cosmic influences. Here is then a yearning for the vital good that belongs to the whole of life and not to a part of it. It is a conception in which the benign role of all beneficent powers is sought for bringing their prowess to bear on the evolution of mortals. The Yajña is even conceived as co-extensive with the personality of Viṣṇu, the Lord of creation. And this is the central thought of Agni-worship even in the celebrated Soma-yajña which belongs to the Kāmya (voluntary) variety of worship and not obligatory (Nitya).

What the Vedic sacrificer fundamentally prays for is especially noteworthy; for, whatever the form of worship, his yearning is for the attainment of a full personality. To this end, he wants the breath of his life to be fuller and richer with adoration. He wants his perceptions of the eye and the ear to be wider and nobler with the sense of worship. And all the wealth of knowledge that he obtains in the course of consecration is desired to reach omniscience. He longs for the might and activity that space is supposed to possess and, though he is on earth, he wants to be a powerful ordainer of the modes of creation with its wealth including agriculture that sustains creatures. Sustenance to all with food is the primary philanthropic consideration that motivates him in undertaking sacrificial worship. He wants to live and let live and, like a true pantheist, invokes the mighty forces of the cosmos like Agni, Soma, Indra, Rudra, Āditya, Mitra, Varuṇa, Bṛhaspati and others to grace his Vājapeya Yajña with their divine presence. But Agni is in the forefront of these invoked deities to guide his operation to a successful termination; for He is supposed to be in highest sympathy with humanity, combining, as He does, in Him the total personality of the obliging divine band. Though the specific powers of Soma in plant life, of Bṛhaspati in speech, of Indra in might, of Rudra in animal life, of Mitra and Varuṇa in observances of truth and duty and of Āditya in law are acknowledged by the Yajurveda, Agni is recognized to be the master-possessor of these powers and the controller of the house-holder who must combine all these functions for the welfare of society and of his individual self on earth.

The priests (Ṛtvijas), functioning at the Vedic Yajña, though they lay bare before the sacrificer (Yajamāna) the general natures of Agni and Indra, Mitrāvaruṇa and Puṣan, consisting in assuring protection, prosperity and reputation to the adorer, have got to reveal before him the fundamental truth that these divinities help to the understanding of the law and of the correct knowledge that Dyāvāpṛthivī (the heaven and the earth) and divine Mother Aditi (the mother of gods) stand for generating universal happiness and for giving unfailing assistance to the oppressed to encompass that purpose. A Vedic Yajña is conducted in an atmosphere that helps build a fine, firm attitude of the sacrificer. The chanting of the Mantras plays an important role in establishing an air of purity and solemnity in the precincts of the Yajñaśālā. It is even thought that the rhythm of the Chandas like the Gāyatrī, the Triṣṭubh, the Jagatī, the Anuṣṭubh and the Paṅkti enables the Yajamāna to successfully check the depradations of destructive influences in all quarters in the space. The sovereign melodies of the Sāma hymns like the Rathantara, the Bṛhat, the Vairūpa, the Vairāj and the S'akvara Raivat, as well as the purifying Sāma prayers like the Trivṛt stoma, the Pañcadaśa stoma, the Saptadaśa stoma, the Ekonaviṁśa stoma and the Triṇava and the Trayastriṁśat stomas, are considered to be his bulwark against the oppression of evil. The seasons Vasanta, Grīṣma, Varṣā, S'araḍ, Hemanta and S'iśira that divide the year of the human conception are conceived to be his armour against disease and death. Prayer, time and divine lore constitute, in this manner, the glorious equipment of the sacrificer of the Yajurveda in his victorious march to annihilate ignorance. The lovely light of the moon, the powerful rays of the sun and shining waters are the means with which the Ṛtvijas declare his exaltation as an unvanquishable soldier in heaven and on earth, driving in no mean chariot on the battle-field of life, but in one made up of Indra's adamant and drawn by the horses that vie with the winds in movement.

And what is the objective of the sacrificer ? A grand conception is here summed up for understanding by the human mind. The Vedic sacrificer's one cherished goal is the attainment of endless and immeasurable Ṛta (Truth) which, the Yajurveda instructs, is personified by Savitā of pure, unsullied light in the sphere of phenomena. Ṛta is also said to be personified by Vāyu in the space, by the Gārhapatya Agni in the fire-place, giving the first call to spiritual forces for attendance on the sacrificer, and by the adored Āhavanīya Agni on the sacred altar of the heart for worship. Inconceivable Ṛta is conceived again as Prāṇa (breath) dwelling in and controlling a living creature, and as life in water and on plains and mountains. The Vedic sacrificer desires to approach all these personifications of Ṛta and be their partner in their immense dance. Him do the Ṛtvijas want to be as inspiring as Savitā of truthful mandates ; as stern as Varuṇa in overcoming evil ; as glorious as Indra in refulgence and majesty; and as decided as Rudra in putting sin to flight. The Vedic sacrificer, therefore, certainly keeps wide awake to absorb the light of vast Agni-majesty, like the sage Aṅgiras, in return for Agni's acknowledging his offerings ; for he knows full well that Agni is the master-upholder of the cosmos (pṛthu ḍharmaṇaspati).

The sacrificer is expected to compete with the rays of the sun in finally establishing his supremacy as a great warrior in 'life's broad field of battle' and prove 'a hero in the strife'. His Rājasūya Yajña obtains its cherished fulfilment by making him fully initiated as a learned law-giver under the vigilant guidance of Savitā and Sarasvatī. He knows now the play of phenomenal forms and, possessed of the essence of heroic life, marches forward in his divine conception of Yajña under the guidance of Bṛhaspati, Varuṇa and Agni. Divine Aśvinas (divine physicians) have helped him obtain the cure of his diseased Prāṇa by removing its contamination from the dark influences of the demon Namuci (ignorance). They have rendered the co-ordination of his Prāṇa (life) and Prajñā (understanding) possible to unveil the mystery of the phenomenal life by ministrations of inspired thought and actions. Such a lovely import of the Mantras employed in the performance of the Rājasūya and the Sautrāmaṇi Yajñas of the Yajurveda points to the dignity of being to which the adorer with the Agni-sense could advance.

Let us also examine how the Agni-cayana worship, conducted on the altar constructed of 10,800 bricks and lasting all the year round, assures his spiritual development. Agni's work is eulogized as incomprehensible by the Mantras devoted to this worship. It is said that Agni first made the sun to shine and distributed its rays in various directions. The extension of the earth and the luminaries is also said to be Agni's work. The person who wants to search out Agni's personality should, therefore, it should be argued, know matter on earth and obtain Him after ascertaining the Agni-energy constituting matter. The evil forces inherent in matter have consequently to be vanquished by him, as they thwart the purpose of genuine knowledge. For, with that sense of victory only, can it be known to him that the radiation worlds, as the Yajurveda instructs, are the back, the earth is the foot, the space is the soul and the divine waters (Āpaḥ) are the generator of pervading life. The riddle of life is then solved ; the search is then attended with success. The material earth then takes on a personality to bless the person who wants to dig out Agni from matter. And once that fair-faced Agni is known, that awareness counts for making a paradise of the earth. The seer of the Mantras of the Agni-cayana worship wants to open the eyes of humanity to the fact that only those who would establish the search of Agni in this manner would make an ascension to the regions of immortality, where no grief exists.

When the Agni constituting matter is revealed to the knowledge of the adorer, He is known, says the seer, as spreading out with slanting rays, as pervading all fields in space and transcending time. He is known to preserve the potency for feeding. Agni is, therefore, naturally revered as divine and, gratefully indeed, an offering is made to Him. The seer finds Him blazing everywhere as every creature's soul and propitiates Him with a pleased mind. It is impossible to touch this dazzling (Dhṛṣat) Agni. This beautiful Agni is said to be the resort of mortals (Maryaśri). This Agni, the Yajurveda instructs, is conscient and omniscient (Kavi, Vipra) and is the Lord of nutrition. He is known to be instrumental in the experience of various sense-perceptions and in assuring illumination to the person who searches Him. He is meditated upon not only as an irresistible power and final resort, but also as knowledge and as the destroyer of evil. Agni removes darkness with His luminosity and, latent in waters and stone, in plants and herbs, He is said to be ever born as the principle of purity everywhere. Agni is, therefore, the seer says, the king of human beings, ever radiating good for all creatures with His sacred presence. By His very nature, it is said, He is the friend of life and is churned out and experienced by the disciplined Prāṇa of His seeker as a fundamental entity. But a seeker after truth is said to know Him as the destroyer of ignorance only with the help of his disciplined Prāṇa and holy knowledge. Agni can then be understood as revealed on the path of 'things in themselves', which constitute Reality in the opinion of Kant, according to the purposeful plan of spiritual evolution ; for He gives a call to higher powers to emerge and the seeker gets the conviction that Agni is a Power and a Presence, stationed in His own glory and nourishing wisdom in His adorer for obtaining His pure flames.

Agni's real worship begins only then. Once the seeker gets the conviction of His grace and beauty and leadership among divine powers with his self-discipline and sacred knowledge, he builds up a genuine social sense to obtain, by prayer and work, the well-being of society. He wants, as the Yajurveda puts it, sweet and nourishing waters to flow and vegetation to grow on earth for supplying nourishment to humanity and wants grateful winds to blow for their proper functioning. The seeker also gets the first-hand knowledge that refulgent Agni is the bearer of endless forms. And to what end ? To assure, indeed, a home of endless light and tranquillity to man on earth, which is His divine code, as the seer sees it. He sprays out His penetrating rays for all with that noble goal in view. His lovers have, therefore, an enchantment for Him and call Him feverishly for the manifestation of His glory. The glory is that, though unborn, He is born as a marvellous child of heaven and earth to supply nourishment to life and, growing with them, sets out on a journey of evolution with an uproarious programme, assuring peace and goodwill among the denizens of the earth, of the space and of the luminary bodies, as the Yajurveda instructs. The Yajurveda thus considers Agni as the life-principle translated into endless forms and functioning with mind for the purposeful plan of spiritual evolution on the earth, in the space and in the heavens that symbolise Him only, as we have seen. But the Yajurveda also says that the law of Karma works in the universe and that Agni presides at that operation and metes out retribution to the toiling humanity. Agni, with his infinite theatre of work, has, therefore, in its opinion, a claim on man to make Him offerings, when even plant-life rises to greet Him with flowers and fruits. For He, at last, is Ṛta and Satya, as the Vedic seer understands, though He has undertaken to inhabit mortal frames. Again, if it is Agni only who dwells in waters and vegetation and man, the knower of the law cannot but pray to Him in all reverence to scare away drought and famine and epidemics as well as thought-corruption and to court His grace as a holy refuge of all and as fundamental life born and reborn in all spheres.

Agni is also represented by the Yajurveda as an eternally young baby playing on the lap of the divine Mother Aditi, the mother of the gods, who, it is said, has given Him an abode in Ukhā that ordinarily signifies an earthen cooking pot used in the Vedic Yajñas. This Ukhā is, however, spoken of as being shaped by the divine Mother and offered to the benevolent gods, described as her sons, for being brought to perfection (S'rapayān iti). The perfection sought is proposed to be planned by the Vasu gods, the Rudra gods, the Āditya gods and the Viśvedevas with the chanting of the holy Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubh, Jagatī and Anuṣṭubh metres. Indra, Varuṇa and Viṣṇu, the most prominent Vedic gods, also help to the modelling of Ukhā. But the material for preparing Ukhā is said to be dug out personally by the divine Mother Aditi and the model shaped by her. The lovely pattern is then handed over to the celestial wives of gods to be installed on earth, while the goddesses of speech and metres and those of the Day and the Night and the Constellations light it up and beautify it. Such Ukhā is also to receive the most precious gifts of supreme light and protection from Lord Savitā and Mitra, in order that it could be steady on earth and fill the directions of the space endlessly.

We must know then what really this Ukhā is wherein Agni dwells. With such a finish as the divinities give to Ukhā, it is idle to believe that it is only a cooking pot serving the purpose of a Vedic Yajña. It must rather be broadly understood as the earth of matter. In fact it is recognized as none else than this earth (Pṛthivī) in the S′. Y. S. A. 11 Mantra 69, where it (Ukhā) is addressed as Devī Pṛthivī and considered to be an inconceivable form of Māyā connected with life and intelligence. The Mantra 76 of the S′. Y. S. A. 11 too gives the conception of Ukhā as Pṛthivī, on the holy surface of which the Āhāvanīya Agni of the noblest Vedic description is invoked to shine assuring the adorer the well-being of the supreme kind (Rāyaspoṣāya bṛhate).

And this Ukhā, if it is merely conceived to be a cooking clay model, denies its description in sheer scorn, when we hear the seer of the Yajurveda emotionally approaching it with a description that it is not merely this steady earth, but these infinite space and heavens (Dhruvā asi Pṛthivī asi, Dhruvā asi Antarikṣam asi, Dhruvā asi Dyauḥ asi) and invoking such mighty and marvellous Ukhā to bless the adorer with prosperity, prowess and progeny.

Ukhā, therefore, in this context, should be treated at least as the earth, the material constituting which is inconceivable, though it appears as clay (Mṛd), and therefore nothing less than Agni with a potency for pervading the space (Antarikṣam) and the heavens (Dyauḥ) and their sentient and insentient objects. And if the divine Mother Aditi has fashioned Ukhā or the earth of matter in the way in which we can see it with our eyes that can have a vision of phenomena only and not of Reality (Kṛtvāya sā mahīm Ukhāṁ mṛṇmayīm), we cannot imagine it as anything less than some appearance of Agni's energy to suit the purpose of our conception of matter ; for the material earth (Mṛṇmayī pṛthivī) is qualified by the Yajurveda as the home of Agni (Yonimagnaye). This view of matter happily coincides with that given by the science, which says that matter, in the ultimate analysis, is energy and that what appears as matter may only be the congealment of energy brought about in a manner that cannot be easily accounted for.

It is indeed a grand conception of the Yajurveda that the principle of Divine Life is spoken of as Mother Aditi, for the appellation connotes infinite prosperity. And the conception is all the more welcome to the moderns, for it shows the solicitude of the Mother to bless our dear earth with growing prosperity through the refinement of matter, which appears to be the mission of the gods under the great Mother's guidance and especially of Agni. Agni's part in this ever continuing evolution on earth, instructs the seer, is to inspire thought (Ākūti), to stabilise thought into retention (Medhā), to raise thought and memory to the level of conceptual thinking (Chittaṁ vijñātam-agniṁ prayujaṁ svāhā), and to act as support behind the articulation of words (Vācaḥ vidhṛtimagniṁ prayujaṁ svāhā) that weave the concepts. This marvellous phenomenon of consciousness, connected with Agni, renders Him in this theatre of matter, in the seer's opinion, the Vaiśvānara Agni of the wakeful condition of man. This condition, the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad instructs, is the first important stage of consciousness in which all social intercourse is rendered possible.

If, as we have seen now, the Yajurveda represents Agni as both matter and mind, we shall presently see that it considers Agni to be the fundamental life-principle also, bearing countless forms, and specifies the waters (Āpaḥ) as the scene of that operation. It has, in this connection to say something that is interesting from the scientific point of view. The Yajurveda clearly hints at the idea that life proceeds with the union of water with ash (Bhasma) that is not different from Agni, and this view compares favourably with that of the modern science which attributes the first beginnings of life on earth to the union of water with dust infiltrating it from the interstellar regions. We get a reference to this ash in the S.'Y.S. A. 12 and the ash is said to be none else than Agni. There is a supplication to the divine waters (Āpaḥ) to accept this ash and bear it in them for its establishment in happy and fragrant worlds. This ash, referred to as Agni only, is thus said to have its abode in waters.

And this Agni-ash, instructs the Yajurveda, evolves in plant-life and indeed in all other forms of life by being continuously born and reborn. Agni again is said to be the embryo of all plants and trees and living creatures. We understand then that Agni is besought to be united with the motherly Ap (water) in the form of this ash and also that the earth is spoken of as Agni's abode in reference to this ash that fundamentally consists of Agni. As Agni is, at the same time, invoked by the Vedic seer to be most beneficent in this union with the water and the earth and to return as food, drink, prosperity and life, that understanding is cemented.

But, says the Yajurveda, the life-bearing may know sin and, in that case, it is Agni again who is entreated to protect man from it. The Mantras 35 to 41 in the S'.Y.S. A. 12 reveal the working of Agni in this way as the life-bearing principle coinciding with the Agni-ash.

Agni, who is said to assure protection to His adorer, is thus Himself matter, mind and life as the Yajurveda reveals. It is natural, therefore, that the adorer, rich in the sense of Agni-law, meets good luck on earth. But this good luck is only the other name of the happy conception of life in which there is the re-arrangement of the adorer's circumstances as he is interested in. Surely a man makes his future according to his thinking and behaviour. And if the adorer exerts to refine his understanding with discipline in life and prayer in congenial environments, he mostly finds that the events coming to meet his consciousness are also congenial. He obtains Nāka (the life of perennial bliss) at last ; for he realises that Agni or Paramātmā is all this show in which matter, mind and life hitherto appealed to him as different entities.

The conception of Agni, in fine, in the Yajurveda is one of blazing omniscience, upholding the universe and nourishing life, and inspiring His adorers to think well and do good. Savitā (Sun) symbolising the mighty refulgence of Brahman, is treated only as an aspect of Agni leading the wise to the highest Truth (Ṛta). Agni is revered both as the Law and the Master. He is the evolving universe of objects and beyond. He is depicted as the Friend (Mitra) of the law-abiding and the Chastiser (Varuṇa) of the wicked in their phase of regeneration. Agni, declares the Yajurveda, helps the worshipful man to the attainment of supreme intelligence, grants him worldly happiness and assures him perennial life in Brahman by dissipating the diseased functions of his mind and Prāṇa (life) and by developing his full personality.

The Ṛgveda supports these conclusions of the Yajurveda, representing, as it does, Agni as all-pervading and as carrying offerings to the supreme Brahman (Havyavāhana) by presiding over the universal sacrifice as the first beneficent deity (Yajñasya devaṁ ratnadhātamam) [1]. The Ṛgveda, while it eulogizes Agni as the beautiful, omniscient upholder of the law of Truth (Satyadharmāṇam) and as the remover of disease and distress (Amīvacātanam) [2], unequivocally proclaims that He carries in His fold those law-abiding persons that practise penance unflinchingly with irresistible strength (Anādhṛṣṭāsa ojasā) and gives them a secure place in Nāka (the Home of eternal bliss)[3]. Agni is spoken of as marvellous, so that neither gods nor mortals can fathom His prowess (Mahastava kratum paraḥ)[4]. He is declared to be the nectarious dish of all that feed on life (Amṛtabhojana) [5] and the most potent remover of the slavish bonds of mortals [6]. And Agni ensures, the Ṛgveda instructs, both phenomenal and spiritual good (Mayaḥ kṛṇoṣi praya ā ca sūraye) to the mortal who yearns to awake in the life of truth, and escorts him to immortal regions (Amṛtatva uttame martyaṁ dadhāsi), enriching his conception of law progressively (S'ravase dive dive)[7].

CHAPTER II

Agni and the Field of Symbolism

MATTER, connected with the earth, is Agni's energy and it is Agni again who is life and conscious inspiration connected with life. He is, therefore, the Vedic Reality that presides at the operation of the aspects of matter, mind and life, as we have seen in Chapter I. Keeping in memory this instruction of the Yajurveda that the objective universe with these separate-looking entities is only an aspect of Agni, we now come to the Vedic conception of Māyā that is present in the human experience of that objective universe. The Vedic seer explains that stage of objectivity as Māyā. Māyā, to be more clear, is explained as a particular understanding of objects reached by man in the light of knowledge connected with the senses functioning in him as a living being in his station in the field of life (Asu). Māyā is also explained by the Yajurveda as a plan which is impossible to be fathomed. In other words, the whole show is denoted as Āsurī Māyā signifying a particular understanding, reached through mind, of sense-perceptions related to appropriate sense-objects in a process that is shrouded in mystery.

But this Māyā or the inconceivable theatre of the objective universe or the stage of matter is approached by the Vedic seer in a spirit of veneration and hailed as at once an inscrutable but unified show of objects and their conscious experience by mind through the senses of knowledge in man in Māyā's own right (Āsurī Māyā svadhyā kṛtāsi). Such powerful Māyā is invoked to show grace to the adorer, that his offerings may reach the Divine Life or the Spirit behind the show. And Agni holds the pride of place in that Divine Life. He is described as the marvellous product of might and as the one ancient friend of man in the role of encompassing human good by transferring his allegiance from the field of inimical symbolism to that of genuine knowledge. Agni is acknowledged as the securest standing place. He is, therefore, besought to preside at the sacrifice undertaken to know Reality. Agni is metaphorically represented as coming from an infinitely distant land, free from grief, on His victorious, crimson horse to be the saviour of His beloved worshipper, for His great vow is to be helpful to the living. He has to wade through the mighty barriers set by up the enemy in the theatre of Māyā, but He knows the art of overcoming them to land the person under His protection on the regions of Amṛtatva (immortality). He is ever youthful to render assistance. The gnawing teeth of the canker, cutting at the roots of the tree of knowledge, and the ants that envelop the tree are sacrificed to Him to leave it free to be availed of by persons who are spiritually inclined. Such is the figurative account of Agni's help to man.

This victorious and learned Agni's friendly presence is what the adorer yearns for at his great sacrifice to set ablaze the centre of his personality, in order that perennial wealth and prosperity may come to him even in the world of objects. He feels convinced that his prayers would avail. To this end, he is prepared to cast into Agni's mouth the cruel hordes that beset his path of right spiritual progress and that appear to be ever engaged in a desperate onslaught to enslave and crush him with arms upraised. The adorer wants Agni to make a morsel of those rogues that stealthily crawl into the sacred chambers of his heart and want to pollute them. He endeavours in this way to extricate himself from the snares of evil that also beset the stage of Māyā as those of good.

The ancient Āryans, it should be remembered, do not pretend to secure their spiritual good less through Agni by sacrificing the good of their mundane existence. They do want vigour and wealth and progeny for the upkeep of their society and, above all, they desire one-mindedness in deciding their day-to-day problems in social, economic and political spheres for upholding their noble Āryan standards. They would not brook the infiltration of robbers, thieves and assassins. They would certainly stem the incursions of persons whose levity of character and self-centredness might bring about an upheaval in the spread of their noble civilisation. They, in fine, want both the solidarity of military strength (Kṣatra) and learning and civilisation (Brahma). They want to act well for keeping their banners aloft ; think well for efficient democratic government and progressive social weal by stamping out disease, drought and sin ; and pray well for their spiritual good. They want both their arms (S'astra) and spiritual codes (Mantra) to stand them in good stead in their mundane life through the magnanimity of Agni who is their one ideal Reality, wearing the aspects of matter, mind and life or rather operating as these aspects, in the field of Māyā that man has to traverse and go beyond by reaching a better standard of understanding which is refined spiritually.

We would do well to see how the Yajurveda represents the progress of life in the universe of matter. The ancient Agni and Vāyu or the cosmic Prāṇa are there in the picture to raise its levels according to its instruction. Agni here affects the Vedic seer's vision as radiating golden refulgence (Rukma) fraught with wealth and food, and the nature of His immortal light is said to be inherited from the divine star-worlds. The eternal principles of darkness and light, wearing different forms but being a unity at the core in deciding final good for life connected with matter, are beautifully represented as suckling this Agni-baby and as setting Him up in regions of matter, ether and radiation to illumine them. Prāṇa is also thought of as divine and rendering extraordinary progress of man possible. It is divided for him, it is said, in the functions of inhalation (Prāṇa), exhalation (Apāna), diffusion (Vyāna), stabilisation (Samāna) and unification with Ātmā after the body-sense leaves man (Udāna). This great Prāṇa, the Yajurveda instructs, sustains life on earth, but is also beyond it and is deathless Vāyur anilam amṛtam). Such Prāṇa operates with Agni for the proper functioning of Karma in different worlds (Tasmin apo mātariśvā dadhāti). And this Agni is no other again than the omniscient, inspiring Sun (Savitā) of adorable light who generates all forms, animal and human, in the universe and leads them to eternal good eventually by assuring them non-misery with its light as Ātmā.

Here the Yajurveda gives a fine picture of the flight of Agni to regenerate life in the universe. When Agni is in His flight, He appears, as the Yajurveda represents Him, like a falcon of beautiful wings, and this eternal movement stands comparison with the fountain of eternal life (Elan Vital) of Bergson. The Trivṛt Sāma hymns function as the falcon's head ; the Gāyatrī Sāma hymns, as its eyes ; and the Bṛhat and Rathantara Sāma hymns, as its wings. The Pañcadaśa stoma hymns constitute the falcon's heart ; the seven Chandas (Vedic metres) make up its other bodily limbs ; and the Mantras of the Yajurveda stand for its name. Such is the Vedic allegorical representation. This flight raises life to a higher and higher status in the scheme of spiritual evolution and plunges the fully evolved persons in the blaze of Ātmā in the opinion of the S'vetāśvatara Upaniṣad of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda (Pācyāñśca pacati) ; and that blaze of Ātmā again is the highest station where symbolic values end and the experience dawns that all are one and one is all (Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmā eva abhūt vijānataḥ) as the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad of the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā instructs. This Agni-life, says the Yajurveda, proceeds thundering like clouds and enveloping vegetation in one embrace of mother earth, and this very Agni-life is eternally born and re-born with a luminous charge and fills the heaven and the earth with its energy. The Ṛgveda too holds that only this Agni-life manifests itself as learning, progeny, wealth, nourishment and thought-power, which are distributed among all forms of life according to their deserts (Vibhaktāraṁ havāmahe vasościtrasya rādhasaḥ) in the discretion of Savitā (Savitāram nṛcakṣasam).[1] Agni Himself, says the Yajurveda, is the essence of life (Aṅgiraḥ) that describes hundreds of thousands of circles to redeem the lost opportunities of the advancement of man in various spheres. Food, drink and prosperity thus appear to be His pawns on the vast chess-board of the cosmos, but sanctification is Agni's highest dice. Agni sprinkles the roots of life all over the universe with perennially prosperous nutrition. Agni, indeed, is firmly stationed at the core of matter to render the highest world civilisation possible ; for though bearing the burden of symbolic night, the ray-bodied Philosopher has the might to rend it and illumine all the regions as S'ukrajyoti (the light of sacred knowledge) to assure perennial good to humanity in the opinion of the Yajurveda.

The Yajurveda clearly says that the birthless and omniscient Agni shines in the material world as fire ; in the regions of the luminaries, as Āditya (Sun); and in waters, as life. The Vedic adorer, therefore, who attains discriminating knowledge with the observance of Tapa and Satya in the field of his station, is said to find Agni revealed, as ordained by the Agni-law, in the cavity of his heart, of the nature of Ādityajyoti, leading him to the transcendence of symbolic birth and death in the theatre of Māyā. Agni, indeed, is the conscient might of the universe, lying, at its core, as Prāṇa (life) and Prajñā (understanding) and filling it with ever new forms that shine in stars and constellations; He is, nevertheless, the one adored Vedic deity of purification and good, sent up among mortals by the Eternal Law to be loved and respected. In His worship stand beauty, wealth and reputation; and His worship, again, leads to the Arcirmārga (the path of illumination) that leads a spiritually regenerated man in its turn to the home of eternal bliss. Then the light of Agni is indeed genuine wealth, for the sacred breath of the life of worship holds Him aloft in the sanctified human heart as sacred light for sovereign peace. Although, therefore, countless star-worlds are His residence and manifest Him in His luminous majesty, a purified human heart does it all the more. The Yajurveda instructs us so.

If, therefore, love for Agni is instinctive in the ancient Āryans, it is also invested with awe; so they pray that they be spared from His wrath. They, however, invoke His aid in their daily struggles and strifes as that of a dear friend with love, and believe that He would help them there unfailingly as such as they have the conviction that He is their cherished leader to bring them the joy of divine life.

All the best of the Vedic invocations are, therefore, placed at the feet of the almighty Agni by the prayerful seers and thinkers and He is accosted by them with one great salutation as an ultimate principle of matter, mind and life in the functioning of the universal law in the world of objects. They pray that the Ādityas, the Rudras and the Vasus, presiding in the different directions of the space, join hands with Agni in bringing out the fullest benefit of His eternal operations to remove disease and death from humanity, holding, as they do, that the Agni, who is manifested in the luminaries and the space and is the deciding life-principle in waters and vegetation, primarily takes cognizance of man (Nṛcakṣāḥ) who belongs to a category of advanced, rational life. He is conceived by the Āryan seers also as a friend of man in impelling his intellectual functions. He is thus considered competent to bring about equitable distribution of food and drink in society, and in the growing population as a perpetual guide. And just to exhibit this high esteem in which Agni is held by them, His adorers worship Him on the altars of their homes as the Gārhapatya Agni, morning and evening, protecting the householders, and as the Āhavanīya Agni on the altars of their hearts to teach them social equity and lead them on to the path of spiritual enlightenment. If, therefore, they offer cooked food and clarified butter to the fire in the Yajña, they make the offering merely as a token of their sincere wish that life in the spatiotemporal flux be adequately satisfied. And that matter and mind should be in one accord to make that life's music sweeter is their one sovereign wish, when they pray that the Citi Agni and the Ukhā Agni, representative of the twin aspects of matter and mind in sacrificial worship, think and act together with a tie of love.

Such a unity is conceived by the Yajurveda to be present at the core of the universe of matter, life and mind. With the help of spiritual forces and time, therefore, the Agni-law is expected to release man from the slavish bonds of unwholesome desires. Suffering would then stop and, leaving the adorer of Agni, it would tread only the path of those that take to self-aggrandisement. This suffering is represented in the Yajurveda as the goddess Nirṛti or the absence of genuine prosperity. She is treated as a cruel force of iron constitution and entreated to liberate the noble and disciplined thinker from the bondage of symbolic ignorance, in order that he may obtain the true values of life in which affliction is absent. It is that sense of suffering the Hindu scriptures believe, that fundamentally starts a Jīva on the journey of life and death ; and, when that sense makes room for the permanent peace of mind with correct thinking, the Jīva (individual soul) becomes free from the distressing and unwholesome modes of symbolism, for it has achieved the goal in search of which it started on its journey.

It is necessary to bring out the genuine implications of this all-enslaving suffering and know how it stops haunting man with stipulations other than those of the Vedic Agni-worship. Let us, by the way, think of the discipline that is imposed on the man aspiring to a release from its iron hold by Buddhism, and digress a little from the account of the Yajurveda. Bhagavān Buddha talks of thīs suffering (Duḥkha), its genesis and its annihilation in his four noble Āryan Truths. What are these great Truths? The first Truth is said to be the understanding that there is Duḥkha (suffering) on earth and that birth, death, disease, old age, grief, the presence of what is not desired and the absence of loved objects constitute this Duḥkha. The second Truth, viz. Duḥkhasamudaya (the source of affliction), which is shown to be of the nature of cause and effect and which is mentioned as experienced by man through his Saṁskāras (mental impressions) of the good, the evil and the like-and-dislike types, is said to result from his actions performed in previous births. For these Sāṁskāras, says the Buddha, set up craving for objects and for clinging to life and death. The third Truth is the Duḥkhanirodha (the destruction of suffering). And the fourth Truth is the Duḥkhanirodhagāminī pratipat (the eightfold path that ensures the annihilation of suffering). This celebrated eightfold path is said to consist in securing Samyak Dṛṣṭi (right vision), Samyak Saṅkalpa (right determination), Samyak Vācā (right speech), Samyak Karmānta (right behaviour), Samyak Ājīva (right means of livelihood), Samyak Vyāyāma (right exercise of thought-behaviour), Samyak Smṛti (right remembrance) and Samyak Samādhi (right meditation). Availing of these truths assures Nirvāṇa (cessation from the phenomenal flux of change) for the Arhat (the spiritually enlightened person) īn the opinion of Lord Buddha.[2]

Coming back to the instruction of the Yajurveda, we see that suffering is consequent upon Kāma (craving) that is referred to as the actor of the drama of "give and take" in the spacious theatre of the Law of Karma (cause-and-effect principle) in the 48th Mantra of the S'.Y.S. A. 7. The Vedic seer of that Mantra asks, "who gives and to whom?" and himself replies, "Kāma gives and Kāma takes." All this functioning in the phenomenal sphere of desire and its gratification is thus the work of Kāma in the opinion of the Yajurveda. Devī Nirṛti (the principle of suffering), referred to before, we thus see, comes in succession after Kāma (the principle of craving), and she is entreated by the seer to be of one accord with Agni and assure Nāka (the region of non-affliction) to the deserving.

We come across, in this appeasement of Devī Nirṛti, the great philosophical truth of the Karma theory that man, as a rational being, is responsible for his actions. If he erred in thought and brought that error into fruition by translating it into positive wrong-doing, which the law of morality cannot concede and which, therefore, the law of Karma must punish, he must suffer for that act without a murmur. But the worship of Agni, as any worship worth the name, must gradually put the mind of the adorer on the status of the tranquil endurance of his plight and take away much of its agony by giving him a conviction that a Jīva must transcend both joy and pain responding to the different sets of circumstances encountered by him in human affairs. The suffering is reduced with the progress of worship to the extent that it is felt ineffective at last ; and, at the height of a positive spiritual experience, the adorer is left to the realisation that nothing is different from Paramātmā or Brahman whom only he has adored with the name of Agni. When Devī Nirṛti or the principle of suffering in the objective universe or in the theatre of Māyā (symbolism) is entreated to be of one accord with Agni and assure Nāka (the state of perennial non-affliction), the terrible Devī of the first conception of the adorer does no longer exist for him and all, including her, is sweet Ātmā or Agni. The entreaty, therefore, should be viewed in a changed context and will then be understood as natural.

When, therefore, with the upholding of Yama and Niyama (discipline in thought and behaviour), right meditation ensues for man, not only does suffering stop, but also the craving that is primarily responsible for the suffering. When craving stops, the status of mind, experienced by him, is one of stable serenity. This truth can be experienced even after our day-to-day programme of meditation to some extent. When, therefore, nothing but Samādhi (meditation) is the ruling principle of life, surely it can be understood that living peace must come for eternity with the cessation of change—the flux which reflects only Kāma or Tṛṣṇā. This is the status of an Arhat or a Jīvanmukta. It is a status of the mind which is freed from 'the servile bonds of hope to rise or fear to fall', while the Jīvanmukta is still in the embodied state. And it continues as a full experience in a perpetually disembodied state of his Nirvāṇa after death. For Nirvāṇa is not annihilation and does not connote want of existence even in the Buddhistic philosophy, which describes it as a perennial status of extraordinary purity and sanctification, from which no fall is possible and which can never be described in terms of human conceptions.[3] Indeed this is the Nāka (the eternal life of happiness) of the Yajurveda, and this is the Mokṣa of the Upaniṣads which is Vikāma, Vimṛtyu and Viśoka (desireless, deathless and sorrowless) where Bhūmā (whole) and Madhu (sweet) Ātmā is an eternal realisation.

The 65th Mantra of the S'.Y.S. A. 12 clearly states that Devī Nirṛti or the cruel Māyā-principle has fastened round the neck of the Yajamāna (sacrificer) hard fetters and he is freed from them during his life-time in the presence of Agni. When that all pervading Presence is realised, the Yajurveda says, there is the exalted birth and the sharing of glorious food for him and further on, there is eternal S'rī (beauty and prosperity) befalling his lot, while Devī Nirṛti has evaporated for all time to come.

We have seen from the account given so far that the Agni of the Yajurveda is the one Reality whose aspects only are these matter, life and mind, and that the Māyā-principle, or Devī Nirṛti for that matter, that accounts for change and consequent suffering in human affairs, can be rent asunder with the grace of the Almighty Agni.

And now we turn to philosophy and science to know how matter, mind, life and symbolism are accounted for by them. First it will be worthwhile noting the views of the occidental philosophers who are confused at the problem of the interaction of matter and mind. We see how the confusion arises. The Idealist philosophers explain that matter results as existing because of mind and would not be out there in the universe, if mind is not first there to think of comprehending it. The Materialist philosophers think that matter is there in the universe in its own right in atomic constitution, that mind is an emanation from it and that mind is an epiphenomenon, emerging from the highly attenuated and inexplicably refined matter connected with the brain. These two warring schools of philosophy exist, because they think that there could be only one entity as Reality. Mind is the only reality with the Idealists and matter with the Materialists and they try to explain the one as an emanation from the other.

The third school of philosophers, knowing both matter and mind as dual Reality, is embarrassed at the possibility of the interaction of these two entities, fundamentally differing in their natures, and tries to explain that the accompaniment is rendered possible as ordained by the Providence.[4] Matter and mind run parallel, these philosophers say, so that every event connected with matter is a conscious event of knowledge connected with mind. But some illustrious philosophers rule out this possibility on the plea that the Providence is the deus ex machina in this operation and that there is no rational ground on which this ordaining can be justified.

There are some who think that, if both matter and mind are separate entities, they can never interact and that they could do so, only if something fundamental is common to both. Prof. Whitehead's thinking[5] belongs to this fold and is respected by the illustrious oriental and occidental thinkers.

But we have seen already that neither matter nor mind is a different entity, but only an aspect of Agni according to the instruction of the Yajurveda. The confusion, therefore, of their interaction is not the question that arises in the interpretation of their action in the light of the thinking of the Yajurveda. We can also say with its authority that the Vedic Agni is not something that is merely common to matter and mind for the possibility of their interaction—the condition that Prof. Whitehead would insist upon—,but is rather Himself that matter and that mind and also life which is the ground of action.

It will be interesting now to know what are the ultimates of matter according to modern science. Physics points out that matter is radiant energy in its final analysis, but it fails largely to account for the congealment of that energy into matter. Sir James Jeans, however, believes that, in the middle of the stars, that are all suns, heat is so intense that matter is transformed into energy,[6] and that this energy, farther removed from the sun-centres, is congealed into matter, instead of wasting itself away in the modern Riemannian conception of space, for an act of creation. This Riemannian space is said to be boundless but finite. Energy is conceived to be transformed into matter in this scheme of affairs,[7] for there is no waste of energy in the finite space. That the earth, separating from the sun at the outset, was only a burning gas which cooled down and concretised as hard matter, as years to the tune of about 2,000 millions rolled away, is only a scientific account.

The other account of the formation of matter may be considered. Bergson, a great scientist and thinker, brings in the conception of Elan Vital, the perennially flowing intense life, which, he says, while it rises as a fountain, throws out spent drops, and that these drops,[8] in the reverse movement of the flow, constitute matter in the explanation of the cosmos.

Now, as we have seen from the account of Agni given so far, the Vedic Agni is the one Reality which exists as both these aspects of matter and mind, and He is the one entity, as the Yajurveda declares, even if He is explained as matter or mind differently on the stage of Māyā. The Vedic Agni, it should be recalled to mind, is conscient and omniscient (Kavi, Vipra, Jātavedas, Viśvavedas), and He is not the inertial energy of modern physicists that would offer itself for measurement in His aspect as matter, partitioned from His aspect as mind, and cannot, therefore, be brought under the purview of science, that can contemplate measurement only of a part removed from the whole. Though, therefore, science claims to measure enertial energy or matter, it is unable to explain it as a living member of the universe, which is an organic whole[9] and which, according to thinkers like Prof. Whitehead, grows on and on. The properties, attributed to matter as such, can, at best, remain but the properties of the "burnt-out ash". And inspite of the fact that there are some physicists who have begun to think that the electrons, going round and round the nucleus in an atom of matter, are conscious monads[10] and that their movements cannot be explained, much that is mysterious remains to be accounted for. And modern science cannot establish that radiant energy, in its electronic wave or point or light-parcel aspect, is a thinking energy, much less an evolving energy, according to its own plan, in its own right and in its own conscience, which exactly is averred by the Yajurveda, as the readers should have noted from the account of the Vedic Agni given so far.

We next come to examine what great philosophers and mathematical thinkers have to say in regard to symbolism in the universe of matter which the Yajurveda recognises as Māyā, and in reference to the mind-factor in man in experiencing such a universe.

Immanuel Kant, whom we first choose to enlighten us on the point, argues in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that space and time are only the respective outer and inner forms[11] of an experiencing mind. Space, functioning as the outer form, says he, is bristling with " phenomena ", which the human mind experiences as lying out there ; and time, the inner form of experience, makes it possible for mind to know these phenomena as representation in succession in a flux. But, says Kant, the human mind has worn coloured glasses since its inception and can, therefore, know phenomena only in their particular aspect of being the repositories of certain properties, but cannot know the Reality or the " things in themselves "; for the human mind, he believes, cannot transcend the phenomenal, or know and understand the Reality behind it. Supporting Kant's view, as it were that the Reality behind the phenomena is never known, the mathematical scientists and thinkers also say that the phenomena of the universe are only symbolic and can be described at best as but mathematical equations[12] which they satisfy. They think that the so-called objective universe is not the Reality of direct knowledge and that even time is a symbol.[13] The material universe is, in their opinion, only inferred from the stimuli transmitted through the nerves and, as such, only symbolic, as it is not directly but indirectly experienced. They base their opinion about this indirect experience on a scientific investigation, which makes it clear that objects, contacting the senses of knowledge, stir up stimuli, which are propagated along the visual, audile, tactile and other nerves as a series of chemical changes and that these stimuli reach the cortex of the brain, where something happens and sensation results. But then this sensation, it is argued, is not like the stimulus excited by the object. Again, they say that human perceptions are not common to all creatures and that creatures other than human have different perceptions. Even one single objeet is never experienced in the very same way by any two human beings as modern science says.[14] Such are the indirect and ununiform ways of mind's experiences of this so-called objective universe of public knowledge. We naturally inquire, therefore, whether what we experience is some fundamental substance. If it is, why should there be such differences in experiences? The substantiality of even the primary qualities of substance, such as "form", that once accounted for the genuine nature of objects is to-day called in question. What is this "form" to-day and what does it amount to? It is, according to the modern mathematical scientists like Eddington, only like a wave of the water of an ocean, which is nothing else but water, and like the "grin of the Cheshire cat" where the cat is not. Now this is embarrassing knowledge, and we want to know all the more what is the substance of the objects that the mind experiences. And even after all the answers to this question are considered, the question still remains — "If that substance is radiant energy according to science, what is its living aspect shorn of inertia?".

What Eddington has to say in regard to Māyā or symbolism is all the more obvious from the following account quoted from his book *Science and the Unseen World*:

"And if to-day you ask a physicist what he has finally made out the aether or the electron to be, the answer will not be a description in terms of billiard balls or fly-wheels or anything concrete; he will point instead to a number of symbols and a set of mathematical equations which they satisfy. What do the symbols stand for? The mysterious reply is given that physics is indifferent to that; it has no means of probing beneath the symbolism. To understand the phenomena of the physical world, it is necessary to know the equations which the symbols obey but not the nature of that which is being symbolised."[15]

He also writes, "Nowadays time might be taken as typical of the kind of stuff of which we imagine the physical world to be built. Physics has no direct concern with that feeling of 'becoming' in our consciousness which we regard as inherently belonging to the nature of time and it treats time merely as a symbol; but equally matter and all else that is in the physical world have been reduced to a shadowy symbolism".[16] It is clear from the account that, in Eddington's opinion, all that is in the physical world is only a symbolic show and that it cannot be probed.

If modern science holds that the objective universe is only symbolic, it also holds that change is a predominantly marked trait of this universe. And it is argued that what continuously changes cannot be real. According to the theory of Relativity of Einstein, which is the crowning glory of modern science, the universe is like a closed chest, a three-dimensional continuum, in which man is seated to experience that the chest is at rest, while it does move with uniform acceleration in space along the fourth direction of Time. But the scene of the action of Reality, in the opinion of Weyl, is a four-dimensional continuum, where space and time are fused into one. The qualitative difference between space and time, says Weyl, does not enter into the physical world of objects which science cuts out for investigation ; nor can human consciousness ever take a clear account of the operation of the whole four-dimensional continuum, but can see only detached events taking place in space. Weyl thinks that these detached events meet human consciousness, pass behind it and make themselves a record of the past for it after they are once experienced, while the scene of the four-dimensional continuum is an ever present present. The detached events, he thinks, continuously march forward in Time for human consciousness to experience. There is, therefore, it is said, no possibility for an observer on earth to lose the motions of "here" and "after" and "now" and "then"; for his vision has developed only in solar evolution and is governed by the fact that it cannot travel with a velocity greater than that of light. Man is, therefore, not a super-observer with the knowledge of absolute Time and Space.[17] E. W. Barnes gives an exhaustive account of this matter in his book *Scientific Theory and Religion*, and makes it clear that man's experience of the phenomenal universe is broken and changeful and not a ceaseless and endless, uniform experience, which alone can be said to be the full experience of a super-observer.

If we also take stock of the functioning of our senses of knowledge towards objects in the world of experience, we note that their behaviour is odd and we find our senses of vision, audition, smell and touch extremely unreliable for direct, correct knowledge. What is our vision after all and what do we see ? We do not see an object of the physical universe in its completeness as modern science says. We have a vision of only the particular points of an object and we say we perceive it. But we do it largely by inference in which the memory of having seen the object previously is instrumental. Do we again see events instantaneously as they occur ? Science says that we do not. To say that we have seen the nearest star is to say, it is argued, that the light rays emanating from that star more than a century ago make it seen just now. Now that is queer. We were not living when those rays started from the star. Again, the light rays, starting from it just now, would make it visible to other persons only after more than a century has elapsed when we should not be living indeed, although the phenomenon has started in our present. This is another oddity. This is an embarrassing condition. Our sense of hearing also, physics tells us, cannot assure us a simultaneity of hearing a sound and the commencement of the sound. If we are moving towards the direction where the sound is produced, we get the report earlier than the persons who are moving in the opposite direction. This shows, according to modern science, that we can take stock only of relative positions in our varying experiences of sight and hearing. Again, our measurements are also unsteady; for the particles of the measuring rod are unsteady, involved, as they are, in a continuous change of position. Smell, again, is not something that attaches to an object; it is said that it is the mind that gives smell to an object. Touch involves, according to the scientific view, only the contacting by the electric particles of our skin the electric particles of the object touched, and we say that the thing is soft or rough, loose or hard, according as the resistance is smaller or greater. Such is the instability of our sense-perceptions[18] according to science. We know only parts and change. It is also clear that it is only the limited, particularly functioning consciousness of a person, limited in powers of experience in this material world of relativity, that does not allow him a full experience.

S'aṅkara, a great Vedāntic scholar of Bhārata, also comes forward to show like Kant and Eddington that the experience of the material world, gained by the human mind, is only one of phenomena, and to say like Einstein that it is just relative, not full. He would even characterise it as illusory. It is only

Māyā, says he, that lets the objective world to be so experienced by the mind and that the Reality behind the experienced phenomena is never known to man except in Samādhi (complete absorption in Brahman). The commonsense experience by the mind, therefore, is only a phenomenal truth (Vyāvahārika Satya) and the Reality (Pāramārthika Satya), in S'aṅkara's opinion, is incapable of human comprehension through sense-experience. S'aṅkara explains that Māyā that gives a peculiar experience of the objective world to the mind is neither Sat (real) nor Asat (unreal) but Anirvacanīya (inexpressible). Māyā is described by him as Mohajñāna (illusory knowledge) and Prapañcajñāna (multiformed unreal knowledge) — not Paramārthajñāna (knowledge of Reality). Many eastern and western thinkers are in agreement with this explanation of the universe of objects. S'aṅkara even says that the symbolic knowledge of Māyā fades away, as a serpent conceived in a rope or as water conceived in mirage, with the advent of Paramārthajñāna (spiritual vision of Truth).

Our surmises on symbolism (Māyā) cannot end, unless we know the opinion of Tulasīdāsajī, one of the few most devout saints with the grasp of Reality that the world has yet produced, in regard to this wonderful nature of Māyā. He has revealed the nature of Māyā in his most celebrated work, *S'ri Rāmacaritamānasa*. The occasion is one of Rāma and Sītā lying on bare earth for rest at night in their forest life. Lakṣmaṇa and Guha Niṣāda are standing guard on them in their night vigil. Great grief overtakes Guha's heart when he sees such royal personages in this piteous condition. Lakṣmaṇa, the brother of Rāma, tries to allay it with the words of instruction that purport to elucidate the working of the symbolic show. He says to Guha, "Only the law of Karma works in presenting experiences to a person. If happiness or misery results, none else is responsible for giving it to the person to whose lot it falls except the person himself. When people rejoice in union or are aggrieved with separation, and if good or evil or mixed good and evil prevails for them, it is all an illusion. So long as this snare of symbolic state extends for them, birth and death, luxury and want are their lot. Proprietorship of lands and mansions, kingship and parentage, heaven and hell are notions there for their understanding as long as they are governed by this Vyavahārajñāna (symbolic knowledge of the day-to-day life). Whatever is seen with the eyes, heard with the ears and comprehended by the mind is the product of symbolic knowledge. A dream gives the experience of royalty to a beggar and of poverty to a king. When both awake from their dreams, however, they find neither gain nor loss. Even similar is the state of affairs in the working of Prapañcajñāna (symbolic knowledge). All have to pass through this dark night of symbolism and experience dreams of various kinds. Only when there is heart-felt disregard for the enjoyment of wordly objects that senses supply, there is the awaking of a person from the enveloping darkness with a spiritual vision. Then only right discrimination results in the love of Brahman. Only Brahman is genuine knowledge, but Brahman is not of the visible kind obeying the law of commencement and form. No change overtakes Him; He is beyond causation. The Vedas declare that knowledge as impossible to be expressed in terms of human standards."[19] This is the assessment of Māyā given by the great seer Tulasīdāsa. The account tells us that our experience of the world of objects is only symbolic knowledge.

Let us recapitulate at this stage our view of the objective universe as the Yajurveda gives and see how philosophy and science corroborate it. The seers of the Yajurveda instruct that the world of objects, with which we deal, is Māyā or some view of objects for their experience by mind through appropriate senses of knowledge connected with life. Next we see that the show is considered by the Yajurveda to be an unthinkable unity extended in Māyā's own right for man to experience, and that the almighty Agni alone can redeem man by shattering the fetters of his thraldom to the short values of symbolism and by restoring him to a full and genuine spiritual experience, where Māyā becomes of one accord with Agni.

Kant avers that human mind can know only phenomena, because it has worn coloured glasses and cannot know Reality. S'aṅkara has assessed the knowledge obtained through mind of this objective universe as no better than Mohajñāna (illusory knowledge) and Prapañcajñāna or Vyavahārajñāna (commonsense knowledge), and yet the learned philosopher says that Māyā, instrumental in securing it for man, is Anirvacanīya (unaccountable) and can fade away only with the advent or Paramārthajñāna (the knowledge of Reality).

Eddington levels matter and all else that is in the physical world to a shadowy symbolism; yet he says that the symbols satisfy a set of mathematical equations and thinks of the unaccountable nature of that which is symbolised. Tulasīdāsa considers this world of our daily experience as only a dream, and yet he says that the law of Karma (behaviour) works here and that man awakes from it no more to dream after getting a spiritual vision of Brahman (Reality) fostered by his sense of renunciation and prayer.

Modern science contemplates this objective world as only a three-dimensional field for an earthly observer to experience only detached events with his limited consciousness, unsteady measurements and strange sense-functioning that can operate only with relative positions and in parts (not in wholes); and yet it thinks that the scene of the action of Reality is a four-dimensional continuum where space and time are fused into one.

We clearly see at this stage of comparison that what is common to the Yajurveda, philosophy and modern science is that the world of our daily experience is unaccountable and yet governed by some Law of Reality, whether we recognise that Reality as the Agni of the Vedas or the Brahman of the Vedānta or the inscrutable Nature and four-dimensional continuum of modern science. We may even know that Law as the Universal Mind of philosophy, which is the substratum of individual minds and objects and which renders the conception of individual objects by individual minds possible.[20] And the Agni of the Yajurveda is this Universal Mind, because He is represented as omniscient (Kavi, Vipra, Jātavedas). He, therefore, knows as the Universal Mind, all the phases of quantitative time in one experience and ordains the operations of the five senses of knowledge, mind and intellect (Buddhi) of man, and yet He is the Agni that is all-embracing and resident in all the objects of creation (viśvataḥ pratyañcam) and fit to be adored as the resort of man (Maryaśriḥ). That matchless and adored Universal Consciousness functions at the root of man in the opinion of the Yajurveda. It controls, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad says, the earth, the water, the wind, the space and its directions, the stars, the light and the darkness as the Inner Ruler (Antaryāmī). It controls the vital airs (Prāṇas), the speech, the eye, the ear, the mind, the skin, the procreating seed and the specific fields of knowledge. It is Ātmā that knows all these without being known by them.[21] This sacred Upaniṣadic knowledge reveals to us the idea of a full universe with its inner control exercised by an unseen Inner Controller, and that Controller is the Vedic Agni, as the Yajurveda says. And some controlling law is what the best of modern scientific and philosophical thought also proclaims to the wide world to-day, because it cannot explain why human consciousness is a self-limitation that can know only phenomena and not "things in themselves".

Anyway, our consolation is that we are intelligent spirits, gifted with the powers of thinking conceptually for framing comprehensive laws to explain how things behave. We have an Einstein who can talk of the great truth of the fusion of space and time as a single entity from which commonsense space and time are only abstractions. We have a Riemann to show that all the points of space have the same relation to the whole as towards one another. We have a Faraday to reduce electrical action at a distance to electrical action at the adjacent points of an electrical field. And we know to-day the great scientific truth that the velocity of light is an absolute constant, greater than the velocity of the mover in the fields of relativity, and that no other velocity can equal that supreme standard.[22]

Though, therefore, philosophy and science explain that the knowledge of the world of matter is one of symbols only and, therefore, a self-limitation, they show that man is, above all, a thinker ; therefore, we can think spiritually too with the ethical law, and that symbolism can never be the final word.

Reality, many thinkers say, eludes touch, arguing that the more we try to comprehend the universe, the more conscious we become of our shortcomings and that we know only our mind[23] in an effort to know other minds; but Bishop Barnes, a great religious scientist, believes[24] that perhaps God wills that we shall understand more and more of the majesty of His creation, though we cannot create anything new or give a final word regarding the constitution of the universe. And we do see in fact that newer and newer truths come to light with the advance of our scientific skill. For example, the laws of gravitation of Newton and "the action at a distance" governing them are substituted to-day by those of relativity of Einstein. The effects of gravitation are now explained in a different context and it is thought that the whole field of the univerese is alive with activity and that the gravitational pull is not what comes from a distance but from a continuous action of stresses spread over space-points and time-moments of the four dimensional continuum.

What is then the possibility of the realisation of Reality with our scientific skill ? Let us reason out and see if there is any. There are laws, as we now know, operating correctly in the field of symbolism and they do permit us to know the majesty of the Creator standing in symbols. If we cherish, however, the dream that we shall have a glimpse of the Creator, as He is, with the help of these scientific laws, our vision shall have to be of a super-observer for the full grasp of the four-dimensional continuum — for the perfect understanding of the indissoluble fusion of space and time. This is impossible; for our vision has developed only in the solar light and we cannot expect its velocity to be greater than that of light. Even so, intellectual speculations of philosophy, while they show the heights to which thoughts with logical connections could soar, do not avail for spiritual enlightenment leading to a vision of Reality; for our speculation can be only with the symbols, and the fundamentals of ethics and morality are not touched in that domain. The result, therefore, would be mere beating about the bush.

We want, therefore, some consciousness of a religious nature, if we have failed with the help of the consciousness of a scientific nature or of a philosophical type, to grasp that Reality. And the Yajurveda supplies that religious consciousness with the prescription of the worship of Agni in the field of symbolism, where He is conceived by the Vedic seers in His progressive significance as the friend of life (Maryaśri), as immortal Prajāpati born and re-born again and again as life, and as Puruṣa who is all this sentient and insentient universe and beyond it. That man is born to be content only with the knowledge of symbols like a machine, is an affront to the dignity of life as these seers conceive it. Man, they say, is born to realise Truth. His consciousness, therefore, we judge, is connected with the Supreme Consciousness at some stage for the interpretation of "something" that does cry out for comprehension on the canvas of the void and beyond it. So even as a child falters on the play-ground, he may, with all his scientific and rational equipment, falter in the interpretation of that "something"; for the play-ground of Life may be too big for him. All the same, he can and he must comprehend Reality, with Tapas (observance of law), Satya (truth) and Yajana (adoration), because he is born fundamentally to comprehend It, as the holy scriptures of all the great nations say. Sages like S'rī Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa and Maharṣi Ramaṇa bear testimony to the existence and the possibility of the comprehension of that Reality — as religious philosophers like Dr. Radhakrishnan point to It unreservedly. And Reality demands of man that he shall not disfigure Its noble handiwork with ignoble passions, but cherish it in love and friendship. That is the message such great personalities spread for the edification of humanity.

If men, therefore, have progressed in the sphere of scientific knowledge, it is Agni's plan that He shall be known to man to some extent for the happiness of humanity. If men like the Buddha, Aśoka, Mahātmā Gandhi, Vinobaji and S'rī Jawaharlal Nehru stalk this earth at times to make their voice reclaim the world from bloody wars and consequent annihilation of humanity, it is Agni's grace that intelligent and disciplined life shall be spared to render further evolution of humanity possible. Had not even the great Einstein, who first exhibited the might of atomic energy, to say hard words against the use of it in the destruction of humanity and did he not recommend it for being utilised only in the works of social reconstruction ? That is exactly what our Dr. Bhabha also says. What else can the wise do ? None can know what is in store for humanity; but mighty America and Russia have also begun to talk of easing world tension by thinking of putting aside nuclear weapons. All this augurs well to inaugurate an era of peace on earth, omniscient Agni willing, for the unfurlment of the values of the spirit after a lull in the storm of the flesh.

CHAPTER III

Agni and the Evolution of Life

WHAT ELSE is the Upāsanā (worship) of that Agni, who wills the spiritual evolution of humanity, but taking a seat near Him ? The significance of that seat-taking is to remove unhealthy, crude and destructive thoughts and emotions from the adorer's mind and replace them by healthy, refined and constructive ones, in order that the thinker of such thoughts can be an agent of Agni to spread with strength Agni's divine proclamation that good shall reign and evil shall be stamped out in the evolving universe.

Before such gracious Agni, the evil yoke of Devī Nirṛti or the principle of suffering in the neck of the adorer is proposed to be removed and the two phases, Chiti Agni and Ukhā Agni (Gārhapatya Agni and Āhavanīya Agni), symbolic of matter or force and mind or wisdom respectively, are supplicated to be of accorded mind and to be united in love to let peace reign on earth. The Mantras 57 to 65 in the S'.Y.S. A. 12 clearly bring out this idea of the adorer's spiritual regeneration. Again, the conception of matter as vitalised Māyā, difficult of comprehension, is present in the 69th Mantra of A. 11 and she is invited to grace human worship after letting her sting go, so that she may result in wholesome good. The earth or matter, which is here revealed as Māyā, is said to be constituted, under its own right, as such for the functioning of senses, vital airs and understanding in man in reference to the objective world (Āsurī māyā svadhayā kṛtāsi).

After the removal of the fetters of symbolism, benevolent Agni is said to establish the liberated sacrificer in His eternal home, uniting him with endless wealth and manifesting all cosmic forms for him. Agni is then said to be like Savitā, upholding truthful law. He is also described as standing firmly as Indra in the field or battle, baffling the onslaught of marauding hordes. With discipline, obtained from such Agni, says the seer, the persons awaking in His genuine life (Kavayaḥ dhīrāḥ) ply their ploughs of unerring actions for the good of the universe and obtain immortal deification among those that shine with the light of knowledge. Vāyu and Āditya are said to help such spiritually regenerated persons in preparing the soil of humanity for nobler behaviour, and divine Sītā is said to assist them by filling the world with drinks of nourishment and inspiration all round under the grace of divinities. With such help available all round, the main reservoir of life becomes richer with the pouring of new streams from more disciplined life on this earth ; and the result is that life as a whole is purified. The ploughing continues and results in raising the level of humanity spiritually with the spread of sinlessness, and materially with nourishing foods and drinks.

Kāmaduhā Sītā (the giver of cherished desires), referred to before, avails of the new atmosphere on earth and provides ever new nourishment of the material and spiritual kinds to humanity in a manner that satisfies the divine, inspiring influences like Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Aśvins and Pūṣan as the Yajurveda says. Then quantitative time registers the rise of new glorious dawns (Uṣā) ; more efficient measures to eliminate disease and spread health are undertaken ; solar energy is more and more availed of. Such is the great luck that awaits the earth and, at this stage, the forces that have helped to the divine ploughing are entreated to rest ; for men that have benefited from this ploughing now know that a new life throbs in their veins, ready to take them to the light beyond darkness (Tamasaspāram jyotiḥ). Even so far can blessings be anticipated for man in the divine plan of Agni. The motherly plants are asked to rejoice on this occasion in their festival of flowering, celebrated to commemorate their victorious achievement in leading men to Yogic health. Those that have transcended the sense of phenomenal life see, says the seer, in this achievement of the helpful plants, the fulfilment of their mission on earth. The plants appear to them also to merge their personality in the eternal music (Chandas) of the rustling leaves of the divine Aśvattha Tree, which stands as the

Vedic representation of this objective universe, and to enter the rays of the Sun for an evolved life. Such is the play of the robust imagination of the Vedic seers, who find even plant-life evolving and merging into cosmic life for honestly performing its part in assuring health, both physical and mental, to men. It is said of the plants that theirs was a promise to life, when they first alighted from light and evolved on earth, that they would supply nutrition to and stamp out disease from rational life; and in consequence of their fulfilling the duty, entrusted to them, they are said to have evolved into cosmic life. What an immense possibility can then be predicted in the Vedic scheme for that rational life to evolve spiritually with the performance of duty in an honest way!

Agni helps the enrichment of the fountain of life in this way. The seer has already recognised Him as pure, sin-cleaving, exhilarating, luminous and adorable essence in his meditation on the premier Vedic Mantra like the Gāyatrī, and now knows that the divine light that shines in his heart has gone out in the phenomenal world as a translation in food and drink and wealth. There is no recognition of the division between the spiritual wealth and the material wealth for him with his realisation of Agni. And that Agni tends the human and the divine worlds, hugging the earth and the luminaries in one enveloping embrace, is his firm conviction.

Prayers to such immortal and gracious Agni do avail. We see that noble-minded sacrificers carry on their symbolic worship with grains and herbs, but they do it, if they have caught the right spirit of adoration, only for manifesting the warmth of their prayerful hearts to Agni, their master. They deify the Agni that manifests Himself before them on the altar in their worship-places as the divine Āhavanīya Agni with the chanting of sacred Mantras (hymns), only because they know full well that the generosity and the unfailing law of their Master Agni would lead them to realise their attainment of a richer and fuller mental climate. It is also true that they propitiate Him with a mind for the gratification of worldly desires as a first measure; and who is there on earth, barring a spiritually evolved chosen few like Maharṣi Ramaṇa, who would not pray in that way in the first stages? But it should be remembered that the ultimate form of worship of the adorers of Agni is guided by the restraint and discipline of the most philosophic character to woo in their very soul this highest Essence and one Lord of the by-gone and forthcoming scenes of cosmic evolution.

The law of Agni consists, says the Yajurveda, in spreading His vast snares speedily for overtaking the evil forces in the universe and punishing them with consuming weapons of retribution, lest they should infect the good from near or afar. His plan is to render them lifeless like the dry trunks of trees. If they are always ready to dart their arrows for the contamination of the holy, Agni removes the strings of their bows and makes their arrows unfit for use. For, says the seer, as the crest of the heavens and the final support of the earth, it is Agni's function to manifest the best of life in evolution as a goldsmith who beats an outmoded gold-form into a shapely design.[1] Animal instincts of lust and revenge of man must, to that end, make greater room for socialised, wholesome emotions where evil is subdued ; for evil has to be subdued by Agni in His great plan of assuring steady and progressive enlightenment to life as the leader of the heaven and the earth. He shines as the sun in the heavens for that very purpose with His rays carrying intelligent and purifying messages to man's heart and receiving those of his in His plan for human regeneration. Matter, therefore, must come to that rich and subtle mould where the manifestation of refined consciousness is rendered possible ; for only such matter can exhibit the mighty operations of Agni. For, while human consciousness functions both for good as well as evil, the effects of both are exhibited only through the material constitution and, therefore, matter's mould must improve, if consciousness should attain higher levels.

Again, matter and mind are the two aspects of the Vedic Agni as we have seen. It can then be argued that the matter-aspect must keep pace with the mind-aspect for preserving essential unity to let the individuality of man develop harmoniously. If it is so, matter must refine itself to the stage where continuous good thinking for man becomes a possibility for an evolved life of the spirit. The spiritual leaders of humanity also bear out the truth of this idea. S'ri Aurobindo, for example, conceives of the advent of the divine forms of a richer material mould for divine consciousness to manifest itself. Plato tells us of the immortal, immaterial forms towards which material forms are ever advancing to realise them in their highest aim of realising the Form of "Good".[2] Bishop Barnes thinks of the intelligent forms other than those constituted of the matter of our common-sense conception and understood by our terrestrial chemistry.[3] Forms of light and air are conceived by the Hindu S'āstras too.

When matter is refined, the vital airs (Prāṇas) also reap the benefit of the regenerated material and the glorious character of the bearer of the form constituted of such matter and Prāṇa reveals itself through his noble actions, in the performance of which the limitations of an ordinary man are found to be absent. Thus only the evolutionary plan of Agni can be intelligently understood. To achieve this end of regenerating the material constitution of the body, leaders of social thought like Mahātmā Gandhi advocate penance for man, wherein fasting and the adequate quality and measure of food articles count towards the advancement of the quality of the material body.[4] Noble material mould must harmonise with noble consciousness ; at least, that appears to be the working of the law in the spheres of matter.

The reduction of the weight of the gross (Sthūla) and the refinement of matter towards its subtle (Sūkṣma) constitution of Agni would, therefore, become a very conceivable argument. The argument seems to be valid, also because we are told that the Vedic seers pray to Agni to give them the rays of glory with which He shines in the divine worlds, for those rays only, they think, would help them catch the spiritual significance of life in its vitals as Viśvajyoti (univeral light of consciousness). If it is thought that the rays of glory, prayed for by the seers, are the rays of the light of consciousness, we can at least think that light is in demand on all sides and that, for the operation of refined, moral consciousness, subtler forms of matter in which the Agni-element is greater are more suitable and can be justifiably wished for. When these rays of Agni-glory are vouchsafed to the seers and the Viśvajyoti realised, they think it would be the Vasanta (spring) of their life, for the attuning of which they also pray to various cosmic influences to play their part. They desire the helpful functioning of the Madhu and the

Mādhava (Caitra and Vaiśākha) months of the spring, of the subtle ingredients constituting the heaven and the earth, of the waters and vegetation, and of the well-meaning fires that shine in the cosmic chambers in the spiritual integration of life that they aspire to. They want fragrant winds to blow and sweet rivers to flow to help them catch that noble attuning. They want plants and herbs to give them sweet juice to nourish that noble pitch. They would have night and day to roll them up to that sweet realisation. They would have the motherly earth and the fatherly heavens to help them obtain that lovely experience. They want all physical nutrition from grains and fruits and intellectual nourishment from the rays of the sun to assist them in getting that sublime status. They entreat all these phenomena to pour elixir in their adoration and fill it with sweetness to fulfil their great aim that they can understand the majestic plan of Viṣṇu, from which this phenomenal construction, helped to by Agni, Vāyu and Āditya, emerges.

The omniscient Agni, manifesting Himself from the all-upholding Law and Power, the Yajurveda instructs, is embedded in all the species of organic life and, conscious of His prowess, carries to the Divine Life the offerings of the man who is purified at heart with the abandonment of the craze of sensuous gratification like the seers that love total life to be regenerated. Only with that regeneration of the adorer in which his life is a unity with the cosmic life, can his offerings flow to the luminous Puruṣa (Hiraṇyagarbha) inherent in Agni; that is what the Yajurveda holds. The Ṛk and the Sāma Vedas that stand for genuine spiritual knowledge are said to help in the transmission of those offerings, and, at last, the beautiful refulgence of the Lord is revealed to the eye and His word of knowledge to the ear of the seeker after spiritual truth. Agni shines in His native light for such an adorer and carries to him an immensity of divine wealth. The sun becomes to that aspirant to Truth the image of the multitude of universal forms, and he lives for a full span of a hundred years with the knowledge of life's true values.

The immortal Agni, adored by the ancient seers, says the Yajurveda, is known to such an adorer even as pleasing and exhilarating as the moon and as the nourisher of all (Bhuraṇyu).

The devotee is then drawn to Agni with inspired words of praise in the confidence of being liberated from half-truths. He is led on to obtain whole visions. The multi-formed Māyā, spreading a blanket of symbolic knowledge over the world of matter, is, at this stage, grasped by him as a blessed bridge on which to cross to the other shore of Ṛta (Truth) with his efforts for self-amelioration. And he realises at last that the force constituting the universe of objects is an aspect of Agni only, instrumental in devising animate and inanimate creation of the material world as willed by the omnipotent, all-thinking Brahman whom he worshipped so long as Agni. This understanding removes his confusion and worry in spite of his knowledge that the symbolic show is instinct with S'oka (grief).

When an adorer reaches this understanding, he supplicates Agni devotionally to enrich the whole tenement of life, in the grip of suffering, with the Prāṇa that can vitalise it as Vasanta (spring). He entreats Agni to grace the created world with the mind that can assure it the Grīṣma (summer) of intellectual warmth 'where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit.'[5] He begs Agni to bless human life with the eye that can let it obtain a whole vision. And he prays to Agni to give humanity the correct ear and the noble speech to make of it a perfect model. Such sincere prayers for the good of all from a purified devotee would be listened to with rapt attention by Agni in the course of fulfilling His mission of helping the creation according to the plan of all-pervading Viṣṇu. How the spiritual regeneration of humanity is proposed to be brought about under the leadership of Agni and of what stuff are the souls that can help to it are thus described by the Yajurveda.

In spite of the fact that the teachings of the Yajurveda are mostly concerned with the spiritual evolution of man and the enrichment of the life of the universe with the help of prayer and worship in ideal environments, we get there stray pictures that put us in the mind of the language of science. One such picture is of a measurable entity in the cosmos and the imaging of Agni-energy in that entity. The material world of Agni is described by the Vedic seer as that measurable entity (Mā); the space is described as a region with which measuring becomes possible (Pramā); and the star-world is referred to as something that is imaged in matter in the space (Pratimā). But these Mā, Pramā and Pratimā are said to be only coverings (Chandas). Let us see now how this idea of measurement is brought into play. We note that the bricks (Iṣṭakā) with which the sacrificial altar (Vedi) is constructed are deified as deities (Devatās), and that these deities carry the names of Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya, Candramā, Vasu, Rudra, Āditya, Marut, Viśvedevas, Bṛhaspati, Indra and Varuna. It will be readily seen now that the word " Devatā " is derived from " Div " (to shine) and it, therefore, connotes luminosity ; and the connotation is passed on to the bricks, which after all are earth — matter. Matter is, therefore, essentially conceived as a luminous thing. Luminosity which is the essence of Agni and can thus be understood as belonging to the star-world or the heavens is, therefore, conceived as something imaged in matter lying out there in the space, which, in its turn, renders the measuring of matter possible. It can be argued then that what is imaged in matter, seen in the space, is only light — radiant energy belonging to the star-world i.e. the energy of Agni according to the Yajurveda. It must follow as a conclusion, therefore, that this Devatā (Light) is the ultimate to which matter is reduced in the opinion of the great Āryan seers. Only the Vedic way of the representation of the cosmos differs from the scientific way of representing it and the details that science gives are wanting therein.

Matter (Iṣṭakā) is asked to behave in a way calculated to exalt life by not letting its vitals and senses run to ruin. It is asked to protect them by giving them the sense of noble restraint (Yamanī) and bright discipline (Yantrī). It is invoked not only to render civilisation stable by adding to national wealth in the spheres of agriculture, cattle-breeding, finance, health and militia, but also in the field of arts and sciences (Brahma). Thus only matter's description in the Trivṛt Stoma (prayers bearing that group name) as the saviour of knowledge (Brahma spṛtam) would be significant, as also its description, in the Pañcadaśa Stoma, as the saviour of physical strength (Kṣatram spṛtam) and, in the Saptadaśa Stoma, as the saviour of commerce and industry (Janitram Spṛtam). All this benediction is implored from the Iṣṭakā (matter), because matter is said to be functioning as a part of the constitution of the divinities like Agni, Indra, Mitra, Vasus, Ādityas, Maruts and others, where Mother Aditi directs learning, Saṁvatsara directs quantitative time, Pūṣan and Varuṇa direct the animal kingdoms, Soma directs the growth of vegetation, and Parameṣṭi directs the happiness of created beings.

And what majestic conception of matter is also hidden behind the prayers addressed to the Iṣṭakā (brick) which stands for the energy of Agni used in the construction of organic life ! It is honoured for nourishing the earthly, the etherial and the starry regions by bringing order in rains and in time divisible in days and nights. The seers pay homage to that energy of Agni for the upkeep of the sacred laws of life, of the organic bodies and of the light constituting them. Creatures, they say, owe their very existence and sense-functioning to it. It is even conceived to be standing for the seed that procreates and deciding evolutionary operations (Utkrānti) by its inexplicable, divine force (Adhipatinā ūrjā). And the Yajurveda gives it a halo of divinity by declaring that the first-born seven sages (Saptarṣayaḥ), ordering creation, stand ready to habilitate it in bright and spacious regions by giving it divine moulds (Divā mātrayā varimṇā) with a harmony in mind and speech.

We thus see that it is the omniscient Agni after all that is dwelling, according to the conception of the Yajurveda, in the three regions of the material world, the space and the star-worlds (Trivarūtha). The seers, therefore, beg of Him that they may be graciously permitted to stand well in the evolutionary force that acts in the vegetable kingdom, in the animal world and in humanity; and they pray that He may so ordain that the forces that struggle to crush humanity are nipped in the bud (Ajātān nuda jātavedaḥ) for their evolutionary progress. And this Agni of the three regions is declared to be life at the heart of the moss (Āvakā) of water in rivers, and He is then said to descend in the twigs of trees and supply life to them. The Yajurveda, in this way, clearly instructs that the Agni, concealed in water and inherent in the universe, leaps up as life in vegetation and in other living creatures. Such is the understanding of the Vedic seers in regard to life known to man. Agni, to them, is thus a unity of energy, life and mind.

The Yajurveda again, as we have seen, conceives of Agni's uniting with the motherly earth and water as Agnibhasma (ash) and of His taking newer and newer forms in this theatre of action. All that evolutionary programme having been put up, He returns at last to Brahman as the most sacred entity (S'ivatamaḥ) as the Yajurveda teaches. This is the loftiest item touched in the plan of the Vedic evolution, for it shows that, befriending life in its varied ordeals in different incarnations, Agni leads man, life's noblest pattern on earth, at last to the land of eternal joy — the Brahmaloka or Nāka, where life's highest manifestation is realised. The path by which Agni escorts him on this journey is called the path of light and knowledge (Devayāna) in the Yajurveda. Agni, connoting matter, life and mind in all their gross and subtle moulds in His involution and evolution, is thus conceived by the Yajurveda as an ever active messenger of Parameṣṭi or Brahman or Prajāpati to bring humanity to newer and richer levels of thought and action till the destination (telos) of Nāka is reached.

It is now necessary to compare this cosmic picture of the Vedic Agni, imaged in matter, and of His thus becoming a measurable entity in the space with the picture of the cosmos that physics reveals to day. It will also be instructive to compare Agni's teleological plan of evolution with the one conceived by the modern science. We see first the picture of the cosmos from its earliest beginning as Eddington gives it in his book *Science and the Unseen World.* In the act of delineating it, he writes: "(There was) space, boundless though not infinite. . . . The world was without form and almost void. But at the earliest stage, we can contemplate the void is sparsely broken by tiny electric particles, the germs of the things that are to be; positive and negative they wander aimlessly in solitude. . . . They range everywhere so that all space is filled . . . . The years rolled by, million after million. Slight aggregations occurring casually in one place and another drew to themselves more and more particles. They warred for sovereignty, won and lost their spoil, until the matter was collected round centres of condensation leaving vast empty spaces from which it had ebbed away. Thus gravitation slowly parted the primeval chaos. These first divisions were not the stars but what we should call

" island universes " each ultimately to be a system of some thousands of millions of stars. From our own island universe we can discern the other islands as spiral nebulae lying one beyond another as far as the telescope can fathom. The nearest of them is such that light takes 900,000 years to cross the gulf between us. They acquired rotation (we do not yet understand how) which bulged them into flattened form and made them wreathe themselves in spirals. . . . .

" As it had divided the original chaos, so gravitation subdivided the island universes. First the star clusters, then the stars themselves were separated. And with the stars came light, born of the fiercer turmoil which ensued when the electric particles were drawn from their solitude into dense throngs. . . . Aggregations rather greater than our Sun have a strong tendency to subdivide, but when the mass is reduced a little the danger quickly passes and the impulse to subdivision is satisfied. . . . Having carved chaos into stars, the first evolutionay impulse has reached its goal. For many billions of years the stars may continue to shed their light and heat through the world, feeding on their own matter which disappears bit by bit into aetherial waves."[6]

Thus, explains Prof. Arthur Eddington, the first habitation of the void space first by electric particles and secondly by island universes, star clusters and stars gradually subdivided by gravitation under the force of the first evolutionary impulse. But the rotations of stars generally continue in the vast space without obstruction and it is, therefore, difficult to understand how planets are formed. This is explained by a hypothesis that, once in many millions of years, it may happen that a star may approach another and raise a tidal wave. The learned professor, therefore, continues, " This rare accident must have happened to our Sun — an accident to the Sun, but to us the cause of our being here. . . . By this disturbance jets of matter spurted out of the Sun ; being carried round by their angular momentum they did not fall back again but condensed into small globes — the planets."[7]

After thus describing how suns and planets are formed in the void, physics explains the measuring of the light-energy by saying that we have spectroscopes in which the light of a star is photographed, its wave-length is determined and its type of radiation is known. But a star, says physics, is not all light. There is matter there of millions of degree heat temperature which, in the course of about 1,000 million years, cooled down in the case of our earth, giving us oceans of water and hardened surface to live on. We know of about 92 elements constituting this matter. These elements consist of molecules which, in their turn, are made up of atoms. Atoms are comprised of nuclei round which electrons revolve in their orbits like conscious monads.[8] And here we come to the ultimates of matter which are never known to the naked eye. They are only inferred from their behaviour in radiation photographs.

So much then about the scientific way of measuring the radiant energy and the matter of this earth in which the radiant energy is concentrated. The Yajurveda describes only this concentration of light-energy in matter, when it refers to the imaging of the star-world (Pratimā) in matter (Mā) and specifies the space (Pramā) as the scene of action, where the imaging of light and the measuring of matter are initiated and continue. Science only explains the phenomenon more clearly by giving statistical averages of this operation in the space. The Vedic way of representing the earth, the space and the heavens as Mā, Pramā and Pratimā respectively can be thus considered to be corroborated by science.

Although the Yajurveda refers to this technical operation, it does it in a curt way and passes on to the evolution of the spirit on earth ; for spiritual progress is the be-all and end-all of the ancient Āryan seers. Telling us tersely, therefore, that matter is essentially the light of Agni or of the Sun, they begin to think how best that matter-aspect of Agni can co-operate with His mind-aspect in making their sacrifice for spiritual progress successful. And, instead of entering into details about that light or energy, which science does the most, they dismiss it as Chanda (covering) and as such only a phenomenal truth described in terms like Āsurī Māyā. Their satisfaction merely lies in entreating Agni to help that energy for its utilisation as a giver of boons (Varutrī) for the final conscious emergence of the spirit or the Jīvātmā from symbolic values into the Highest Law which is described as Ṛta.

The Yajurveda thus contemplates the ultimate picture of life as one of entering into union with Ṛta or Nāka (the condition of perennial bliss) after the Jīvātmā's occupying various theatres of action in successive births as decided upon by the law of Karma. It traces, in other words, the progress of life in the course of its transmigration into various Yonis which we recognise by the term "species". It would be, therefore, interesting to see what modern science has to say in regard to the evolution of life in the universe by species, the factor of variations in species that baffles the understanding of the scientists, and the factor of emergence in the teleological survey of life — the factor that views the unpredictable, purposeful march of life, unfettered by the determinist mode which merely explains it by the theory of heredity and adaptation to environment.

We first see the specification of species and the factor of variation in them from the point of view that science holds. It is a scientific idea that a number of species as plants and animals, amphibious and land-dwelling, have run pari passu and struggled with environment for the survival of the fittest on our planet. Fossils unearthed tell that tale. Gill-breathers became lung-breathers as life occupied the theatre of land and flying insects and reptiles filled the world in the Palaeozoic eras. Cold blood became warm by the temperature of air and reptiles became birds. Brain, working in the lower parts of the spine, mounted on to the head. We switch on for noting further change in the evolution of life from the Mesozoic era to the Tertiary era and we come to the age of mammals. We thus come across elephants, horses, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, lemurs and other large animals. Anthropoid monkeys swarmed the genial forests of the Miocene age. We come eventually to the Neanderthal man and the Neolithic man. All this is the constructive record of evolution from about 500 million years ago to about fifty million years ago as Bishop Barnes records in his book *Scientific Theory and Religion.*[9]

We do see in this account of the development of species that the factor of heredity does count for likeness in succeeding generations in the evolution of life; but, to our great amazement, we also notice that the factor of variation which counts for an abrupt change in species is inherent in the history of animate creatures ranging from unicellular to multicellular organisms. What is this inherence of the factor of variation? And this occurrence of variations in species that brings about a sudden change in them is a factor that baffles scientists in its interpretation. If then the ultimate cause of the evolution of life is shrouded in mystery, we can surely begin to think of some intelligent, creative Power with a will for that difference. The full knowledge of the germinal material also is still a mystery with all the research for exploring the new potentials of life. The Āryan seers then, philosophically praying to Agni, who stands guard on that creative, unpredictable evolution, to let them stand well and progress in their theatres of action, do not appear to be misguided in this state of confusion and uncertainty, prevailing in the field of science.

The determinist mode of evolution, established by anatomy, embryology and palaeontology, which accounts for the evolution of species only by the facts of heredity and adaption to environment, is superseded to-day by one of creative operation of life, as corroborated by biology, which, in these days, has become philosophical. In this creative plan, life is viewed as purposive and individuality counts for progress. This position of biology brings us to the Doctrine of Emergence. Let us then understand this Doctrine, propounded by Prof. Lloyd Morgan, to understand that the levels that life reaches in the course of time are purposive and never such as could be predicted. Dr. C.E.M. Joad explains the Doctrine with an illustration in his book *Guide to Modern Thought*. He says that oxygen and hydrogen combine to produce water, but that wetness in water is a new characteristic and is not one either of oxygen or of hydrogen. Here this wetness is explained as emergent. He further explains that to collect merely the necessary constituents of body like flesh, nerves, blood and brain is not to produce a living human body. It is merely a jumble. A living body, he argues, presupposes a plan and an arrangement ; for then only, he says, life is emergent, which is not present in separate parts. Joad, at last, beautifully concludes, " The evolution of living organisms is, indeed, nothing but the incessant appearance in the universe of new qualities. new powers, new activities, new modes of behaviour, new attributes of knowledge and skill of which there is no antecedent in the component parts, no manifest promise in the germ itself. Hence, the occurrence of variations in species, which, as we have seen, presents an insurmountable difficulty to the materialist view of evolution, is merely a particular and rather sensational example of a process which is going on all the time. Life, then, proceeds by the development of novelties; it is, by its very nature, that which is always bringing to birth what is new. . . . The process of evolution consists, therefore, in the emergence of ever higher levels of vital development; and by higher levels of vital development we shall mean life possessed of greater powers and endowed with a capacity for greater variety and intensity of experience."[10]

This, in other words, is the purposive evolution of life where it wants to reach some new destination which we cannot predict. Life, surely, is not fully determined by the previous circumstances of heredity and environment as mechanist causation would have us believe, but it appears moving teleologically to realise some goal that lies in front of it. In view of this goal, life will put in purposive activity and grow under the inspiration of its destination — telos. This end is the fullest harmonious development of man's physical, intellectual and spiritual powers. On this end of the harmony of development of powers does Dr. Radhakrishnan lay accent in his teachings for man to grow to be a perfect unit of society and to be able to correctly interpret the higher values of life. From the field of potentiality then, new powers reach the field of actuality, as Aristotle would say. Indeed there appears to be no yoke of the past on life so sickening that it cannot shake off. If freedom is the key note of the modern philosophical thought, such is also the modern scientific trend. Indeed life is free and mind is free. They can function in ever new avenues of the orchard of the universe and attain the glory of the Divine Life that the Yajurveda contemplates. Aristotle, with his theory of teleological causation, and Kant, with his theory of the freedom of will, would also be disposed to grant this conclusion as we can judge from their recorded views. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad also conceives an unfettered march of life, as the Yajurveda does, by saying that the Jīvātmā (individual soul) always takes, in the course of transmigration, newer and more agreeable forms of a Pitṛ or a Gandharva or a Deva or Prajāpati or Brahman,[11] in each one of which, as it goes higher up, joy is a hundred times more intense than in the previous one.[12] S'rī Aurobindo envisages the advent of divine life on earth perhaps in view of this teleological conception of the mission of life.[13]

Considering the matter squarely, it appears that the Vedic conception of Agni is in consonance with the teleological conception of the unpredictable, purposeful and creative evolution of life of the philosophical scientists of modern times; nay, it seems to be even more advanced than theirs. For, while they think that life's levels could rise to ever new sublimities, it is doubtful if they would grant that a creature could ever be one with the Creator,—the union that the Yajurveda only too readily contemplates and the Vedānta fully affirms. The Vedic seers, therefore, bow to Agni's light that attracts all essences (Harase) and purifies while it illuminates (S'ociṣe). In all gratitude, therefore, they make offerings to Agni, existing in man (Nṛṣade) as Prāṇa in his senses and bowels ; to Agni, inherent in waters, as Vaḍavāgni ; to Agni, instinct in the Yajña, as the Āhavanīya Agni ; to Agni, latent in the radiation worlds, as Āditya ; to Agni pervading quantitative time (Saṁvatsara) and space, as Vāyu ; and to Agni, stationed in the human body, as Udāna Prāṇa with which the Jīvātmā leaves on its journey of transmigration at the time of death.

This Agni, functioning in the human body as the breath of life (Prāṇavāyu) to keep it alive, is gratefully remembered to purify the sacrificer (Yajamāna) after cutting his roots of evil (Nyantriṇam). The Vedic seers do not conceive of this Prāṇa as the lone product of the chemical changes going on in the body as materialists think, but as a part of the immortal Vāyu to which it finally returns when the body becomes a heap of ashes (Vayur anilam amṛtam atha idam bhasmāntam śarīam) after death. The Vedic idea of life again on earth is fundamentally different from that of the materialist, who believes that nothing remains of life after death overtakes the living organism. The Vedas believe that Prajāpati—and this Prajāpati is equated to Agni—wished that He should enter bodies as the Jīva (phenomenal soul) to enjoy phenomenal life (Āśiṣā draviṇam icchamāṇaḥ) through senses, and that He Himself is seated in these life-operations as an omniscient witness (Nyaṣīdat ṛṣiḥ) governing senses, but not governed by them. He has thus veiled His significance as Saccidānanda (Existence, Knowledge and Bliss of a perennial nature) from the phenomenal seer, functioning as the Jīva (individual soul) ; but He is there all the time as the Jīva's eternal witness (Sākṣī), till it extricates itself from the grip of the symbolic values of life and understands its genuine immortal stuff. This understanding of the Jīvātmā of its immortality is, in the opinion of the Vedas, its final emergence in the purposeful plan of its spiritual evolution. This, in other words, is the highest development of life in the opinion of the Yajurveda. When the sage S'vetāśvatara says in his S'vetāśvatara Upaniṣad that the Lord, as the origin of the universe (Viśvayoniḥ), helps to the Jīvātmā's maturing (Svabhāvaṁ pacati) and assigns higher and higher status to it according to its merited share (Pācyāñśca pariṇāmayet yaḥ)[14] till He is revealed to the Jīvātmā in His plan of purposeful evolution, he refers only to this final emergence of life with the understanding of its immortality as the climax in the course of a person's transmigration.

Saccidānanda or Brahman who is His own continuity in the Vedic Agni is the final destination for all living forms for being realised teleologically as the Upaniṣads assert. The sage S'vetāśvatara says that the Jīvātmā is of the nature of the solar light (Ravitulyarūpah) and explains that, though it is its (Jīvātmā's) very nature to think egoistically as 'I' (Saṅkalpāhaṅkārasamanvitah) i.e. as a separate intellectual and spiritual entity (Buddher guṇena ātmaguṇena caiva) and to behave as different from Brahman, it is Brahman in quintessence (Aparopi dṛṣṭaḥ).[15] It develops, says the sage, with sensations, perceptions and ideas of phenomena and acts under their impulse.[16] It goes on thus assuming various gross and subtle forms in its transmigration responding to its knowledge and actions in previous incarnations.[17] When the Jīvātmā, however, with its spiritual merit, ultimately gets the conviction that only Brahman, birthless and deathless, is out in these infinite forms of different living organisms filling the universe, the sage says, it is emancipated from the symbolic values of life.[18] And this, in the language of the Yajurveda, is the realisation of the almighty, omniscient Agni and life's highest purposeful evolution.

CHAPTER IV

The Personality of Agni

WE HAVE now fully seen that Agni with His suzerain sway over phenomena is considered to be the support of the material world with a control over life which is the essence of water. He is, therefore, considered the master-ruler of hundreds of thousands of foods connected with the nourishment of life, the crown of wealth and the omniscient friend of creation. He is thus called the upholder of creation. He is also the destroyer of sin (Vṛtrahan) and the purifier of man. Agni is said to have been churned out by the immortal Prāṇa and Prajñā from the Highest Law for cosmic evolution. He is described as the leader of the toiling good along the path of illumination (Devayāna) with their sacrifice consisting in cultivating detachment in life. In view of this immensely beneficent role played by Agni, the ancient Āryan seers saluted Him as omniscient (Kavaye) and almighty and as the most deserving of worship (Medhyāya) with ennobling hymns of praise. In view of the fact that Agni impels the human heart to contemplate on and judge the expanding divine life after breaking its knots of doubt and sin, the sages of the Bhṛgu family established fire-worship in a symbolic form in their forest life for man to follow in honour of His marvellous (Citra) prowess.

The adorers call Agni an ever wakeful and wise protector of man (Jāgṛviḥ sudakṣaḥ janasya gopā), concealed in their hearts (Guhāhitam), as in a plant, for being realised. They want to congregate in friendly circles for the worship of this immortal messenger of Brahman (Dutam amṛtam). They offer clarified butter and herbs to Agni with a prayer that Brahman purify them and make them deserving inheritors of divine life. If habitation is available for man on earth, Agni is known to them as habitation-giving (Vasu). If evil thwarts their life, Angi is known to them as its sole destroyer (Rakṣasaḥ kṣapaḥ). If good (Bhadra) can come to them, they know Agni as that good-inspiring force. If human mind can shed away sin and return to purity, they know Agni as competent to manage that metamorphosis. And, therefore, they pray on till their hearts are touched and sovereign peace takes hold of them (Bhadraṁ hṛdispṛśam). In that sublime state, they think that Agni is the fulfilment of their law of Karma culminating in all-good (Kratoḥ bhadrasya dakṣasya sādhoḥ) and their charioteer, driving them to Brahman — the Immensity of Truth (Rakṣaḥ ṛtasya bṛhataḥ); and they realise that He, as none else would, stands before them to shower His gold rays of grace after deriving satisfaction from their feeling prayers.

They have a conviction of this nobility of Agni as a mighty and philanthropic emanation from the Almighty Brahman for knowing, in His omniscience, man's thought and deed and leading him to ever new heights of spiritual knowledge as the reputed power of good (S'ive) and purity, always operating in his proximity. The adorer knows that the sages of old set up the institution of the Vedic Yajña (sacrifice) with the rule of the practice of penance i.e. restraint of mind and senses (Tapasā) in the hope of crossing to the shore of eternal joy by the path of light and spiritual knowledge as led by Agni. He also knows that the sages went that way and that he must follow suit to obtain, without return, the Nāka — the highest and most beautiful Home of eternity (Tṛtīye pṛṣṭe adhirocane divaḥ). He is aware all the time that Agni is the stabiliser of the universe (Bhuraṇyu) as also the lord of all that is noble (Satpatiḥ), crushing the ignoble under His feet in the three worlds with the might of a hero. The adorer, therefore, wants to shake off his sin with the practice of Agni-worship as laid down by the sacred scriptures (S'ruti) for genuine enlightenment; for his association with Agni is his association with all the divinities (Viśvedevāḥ). He knows that Agni-worship can overcome his shortcomings in thought and deed (Chidram pṛṇa) and bring about the appeasement of the cosmic Prāṇa leading to universal light (Viśvajyotiḥ). The adorer knows, above all, that Agni it is who presides over the operations of His energy imaged in matter (Mā), in order that the space (Pramā) can exhibit matter. And he knows too that Agni refines that matter to the extent that justifies Brahman's (Parameṣṭeḥ) inviting it to obtain a seat in His highest Home and helping that matter (Svayamātṛṇṇā iṣṭakā) thus finally become an all-pervading force with its limitations cut off.

As the Agni-energy is conceived as matter that has the prospects of merging into the perennial life of Brahman, it is also spoken of by the Yajurveda in its language of figures as the directions of the space functioning to root out evil from the earth with Agni directing it in a regal paraphernalia.

The Agni-energy is said to be, in that context, the refulgent eastern direction (Rājñī prācī dik) functioning under the protection of the eight Vasus headed by Agni who is ever ready to render the enemy's shafts ineffectual. That Agni-energy is the magnificent southern direction where the eleven Rudras, under the captaincy of Indra, stand guard on it for removing disease and death (Hetīnāṁ pratidhartā). It stands as the sovereign west where the twelve Ādityas under Varuṇadeva are ever present to scare away oppressors. And it is also the self-lit north where the Maruts, under the presidency of Soma, blow wants away. That very Agni-energy is finally spoken of as a protective upper direction (Adhipatnī bṛhatī dik) where all the gods, under the sway of Bṛhaspati, are ever vigilant to end all imaginable obstacles to assure the good a happy, endless life.

And this all-pervading Agni-energy is but an aspect of Agni who is conceived by the Yajurveda as having the flames of gold (Harikeśaḥ) and the rays of the sun (Sūryaraśmiḥ). Various seasons of time are conceived as attending on that Agni as civil and military officers, and refulgent regions of space, as celestial damsels (Apsarās). These Apsarās[1] are given significant names. They are called Puñjikasthalā, signifying beauty and prosperity, and Kratusthalā, standing for the conceptions of names and forms. They are Menakā (worthy of respect) and Sahajanyā (common to all). They are Pramlocantī and Anumlocantī, making demonstrations of their looks to man. They are Viśvācī (permeating the whole universe) and Ghṛtācī (enjoying clarified butter). They are Urvaśī (conquering desire) and Pūrvacittī (stationed in man's mind from the beginning). Agni's weapons too are described as extraordinary. They are in the forms of beasts like tigers and poisonous reptiles as also Rākṣasas. They are in the forms of flood and avalanche, thunder and lightning. Agni is then even Vāyu and Parjanya. Agni's grandeur as Īśvara is thus complete.

We would now know why it is Agni-worship so much that is prescribed for a Jīvātmā for the realisation of Brahman — the highest Vedic and the Vedāntic conception of Power and Law — who is all this universe and beyond. The obvious reasons are that the Jīvātmā is conceived to be of the nature of the light of Savitā (Sun)[2], and is said to have the reflection of Brahman in it. Savitā again is said to be the revealer of Brahman's pure, immortal refulgence (S'ukrajyotir ajasram) for man to worship as conceived by the Vedas and the Upaniṣads ; and Savitā, functioning in the star-worlds, is only Agni as we have seen. This Brahman, without a second, is also referred to as Viśvakarmā or Pitā in the Yajurveda and is said to operate as the Āditya Puruṣa (the principle of supreme consciousness in Āditya or Savitā) as much as Agni who behaves as Gandharva in His significance of upholding this earth and speech. Such are the grounds on which we can understand that the worship of Agni on the altar (Vedi) of the household or the worship of the Sun stands for the worship of Brahman.

Agni is said to be the highest inspiring and eternal light in its Āhavanīya form, under whose command the Sun is mentioned as going round all the worlds with an eye for their working and protection, filling the heaven and the earth with His creative light (Vimānaḥ āpaprivān rodasī antarīkṣam) and knowing the minds thinking therein. Agni is, for that matter, the Sun of crimson glow and beautiful movement who throws His rays all round and pervades all space, protecting the phenomena of the beginning and the end of worlds and yet transcending them. In company with such benign Agni, therefore, the adorer feels that he transcends the material envelope of this earth and obtains the subtle space-regions ; and that, overcoming the space too, he attains the light of the star-worlds. He feels he goes even beyond the light of the stars in the company of Agni and is, at last, in the sacred halo of the Āditya Puruṣa (Svarjyoti). The seers like Kaṇva recognised, in that adorable luminosity of the omniscient Āditya Puruṣa, the marvel of the creative goodwill the space (Pramā) can exhibit matter. And he knows too that Agni refines that matter to the extent that justifies Brahman's (Parameṣṭeḥ) inviting it to obtain a seat in His highest Home and helping that matter (Svayamātṛṇṇā iṣṭakā) thus finally become an all-pervading force with its limitations cut off.

As the Agni-energy is conceived as matter that has the prospects of merging into the perennial life of Brahman, it is also spoken of by the Yajurveda in its language of figures as the directions of the space functioning to root out evil from the earth with Agni directing it in a regal paraphernalia.

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When the adorer knows Agni in His supreme glory as the Āditya Puruṣa, he crosses the symbolic knowledge of Māyā and reaches his destination — the highest regions of luminosity and consciousness (Jyotir uttamam). Though he has obtained the heaven of his desire by his offerings to Agni in the Yajñas indicated by the S'āstras, he now goes even beyond the prescriptions of those Yajñas and knows the highest universe-upholding sacrifice (Viśvatodhāraṁ Yajñam), in which the fruits which he yearned for are forgotten and do not impede his forward march for transcendence. He has by now cultivated detachment and rectitude by the attainment of spiritual knowledge. He has no desire now for wealth and progeny and attains, therefore, the immortal illumination where birth and death, and old age, disease and grief are forgotten, as if he had never encountered them before.

And what constitutes the spiritual knowledge that delivers man to such endless illumination ? It would be most profitable for the readers to learn what it is from the Gītā, the most popular scripture of the Hindus reputed all the world over. The Gīt gives a synopsis of this unique instruction. It says that man is a creature of his convictions. These convictions are said to be of three categories, viz. the Sāttvika, the Rājasika and the Tāmasika. Those persons that want to attain light and the peace of mind (S'āttvika bhāva) adore divinites, says the Gītā. Those that are dominated by passion (Rājasika bhāva) are said to worship angry forces like th eYakṣas and the Rākṣasas. Those that are in the dominion of darkness, where there is the subversion of right and wrong (Tāmasika bhāva), propitiate ghosts and evil spirits, and thus inconsiderate violence and consequent undoing of the noble plan of God is their unwritten code of life in the opinion of the Gītā. The three varieties of human beings, again, are said to have different likings for food.

Those belonging to the Sāttvika mode love sweet, juicy and nourishing dishes that help build strength and joy for the judicious upkeep of life and spirit. The people of the Rājasika type like to eat pungent, sour, saltish, hot, astringent and passion-inflaming varieties that bring depressions of sorrow, grief and disease in their wake. And those of the Tāmasika kind are fond of foods that are stale, hard and impure.

The Gītā says that, as their foods differ, the sacrifices of the three varieties of people also differ fundamentally. The Sāttvika ones makes a sacrifice enjoined upon them by the S'āstras and here there is no aiming at the fruit. The Rājasika ones perform a sacrifice exactly with the aim of reaping the fruit ; their sacrifice is the product of show. The sacrifice of the Tāmasika people is conspicuous by the absence of charity (Dāna) and sacred Mantras and it is accompanied with the rites disallowed by the S'āstras.

The practice of penance (Tapa) accordingly varies with the three types as the holy scripture instructs. The penance of the Sāttvika people is said to consist in non-destruction (Ahiṁsā) and celibacy (Brahmacarya) accompanied with purity and open-heartedness. It is also one in which the learned and the wise are honoured as well as the divinites. The Sāttvika people speak pleasant and beneficial words of truth from the depths of their hearts which are "from rumours freed". They are also deep students of the intellectual and the spiritual aspects of life treated in the books of the wise. In addition to this, they cultivate the inner joy of mind and pleasant reserve that count for the purification of their approach to life.

This Sāttvika Tapa, undertaken by the wise in all sincerity, says the Gītā, is unaccompanied by any craving for fruit, while the Rājasika Tapa is a hollow exhibition of pomp and power and is aimed at winning prestige. The latter kind, therefore, is lightly dismissed as transient such as can never lead to steady progress ; for such a wordly craving is shown to deprive its upholders of ascent to the lofty heights of the spirit. The deluded Tāmasikas also practise restraints, instructs the Gītā, but says that their sole aim is to uproot others and that their values of life are, therefore, confused and chaotic. The fads of these fastidious people do not permit them a vantage ground for progressive outlook, and we are told that they go down in the scales of life.

The charities made by the three are also said to be highly divergent. The Sāttvika charity, says the scripture, is offered to the meritorious at the right moment and at the appropriate place as a matter of duty, while the Rājasika charity is undertaken with an aching heart and offered with the sense of mutual benefit, mooted in attachment to fruit. It is said that the Tāmasika people also offer charities, but they are given to the undeserving with a scoff and a sneer without regard for time and place.

Such are the highly differentiated attitudes of the three types of people as summarised by the Gītā.[3] The noble and the ignoble are again shown always to be at cross-roads with their highly divergent mental moulds. The noble are said to be intrepid, pure and balanced in thinking, upholding Yajña, Dāna (charity) and Tapa of the right character. They are straightforward and studious. Non-violence, truth, dispassion, detachment, softness and peace of mind are ingrained in their very being. Steady and modest by nature, they are said to be ever ready to treat the needy compassionately. They possess self-respect and fortitude, purity and forbearance. They harbour no grudge and are free from hauteur. Such are the noble with their divine wealth of character (Daivī sampad). The sacred book then recounts the demoniacal qualities (Āsurī sampad) of the malignant by saying that these misguided souls make a parade of noble intentions, while they cherish ill will and are wedded to conceit, rage and harshness.[4]

But where are the noble and the ignoble to play their parts with their varying types of qualities and convictions ? This field (Kṣetra) of action, says the Gitā, is this Saṁsāra or the wordly life. This field in which a person is called upon to act is said to be constituted of the five elements, ego, intellect, the subtle nature, the ten senses, mind, the five objects of senses, desire, repulsion, happiness, misery, slaughter, conciousness and courage. This field is denoted as subject to change. The person who wants to cross this changeful field of delusion is invited by the Gītā to cultivate Jñāna (discernment), which consists in the observance of humility, sincerity, non-violence, forgiveness, honesty, reverence for the learned, purity, firmness in trying temptations, and restraint. And the express mandate of the holy book is that the person seeking emancipation from phenomenal life should possess these qualities. He must lose his attraction for sense-objects and set aside his egoism. He must look down upon birth, death, old age, disease and discomfiture as faulty reckoning. He cannot cling to his son and wife and home for solace. He must be fully detached. He must always be self-possessed and balanced in mind in suffering the vicissitudes of life. He must cease to be gregarious and should love solitude. He must love God above all and never fall from that holy attachment. He must incessantly be after the realisation of Ātmā in his course of study and meditation. Such should be the mental and moral equipment of the seeker after Truth in the opinion of the Gītā.

The Gītā asserts that only the person so equipped can claim to attain Reality which is the Light of lights beyond darkness (Jyotiṣām api tat jyotiḥ tamasaḥ param ucyate), stationed far and near as the Inner Controller of all creation as of every heart.[5] The Yajurveda contemplates this stipulation of the true values of life as given by the Gītā, when it says that the adorer of Agni, knowing the universe-upholding sacrifice (Viśvatodhāraṁ yajñam), becomes detached (Svaryanto nāpekṣanta) and attains the immortal regions of the highest illumination (Divo nākasya pṛṣṭāt svarjyotiḥ agām aham). The attainment of that state of release from symbolic shackles presupposes that he has obtained the Sāttvika bhāva (status of the peace of mind) with rectitude, that he is resigned to God and that he does not crave for fruit for whatever good he does. His Yajña, Dāna and Tapa are all undertaken, as prescribed by ethics, from the noble stand of desirelessness which sounds a sovereign note in his being. He has the Daivī Sampad (group of noble qualities) to his credit as a foregone conclusion. He had tried this changeful field of sorrow (Saṁsārakṣetra) and found it wanting; he wants, therefore, to soar beyond it with Jñāna to obtain transcendence. He has evolved perfectly in obedience to the ethical law never to dance again on the stage of dualities (Dvandvas). Yet, if he does, he does so, it should be thought, as commissioned by his Master; but he has, then, in his phenomenal life the perennial memory of Being (Dhruvā Smṛti)[6] that he is an immortal soul established in Ṛta (the highest Truth), never to fall.

The Agni, whom he has adored so long, has progressively led him to the universe-upholding sacrifice (Viśvatodhāra Yajña) as his leader, whose final cast is one of Āditya Puruṣa or Viśvakarmā or Prajāpati or Puruṣottama or Brahman or Saccidānanda — we may give God any name we like — pervading the infinite forms of the universe with infinite breaths and infinite varieties of sustenance. On throwing a retrospective glance, we see clearly that the Yajamāna (sacrificer) started with giving material offerings to the Vedic Agni in His three aspects as the Gārhapatya, the Āhavanīya and the Dakṣiṇa Agnis and has ended with the offerings of love to Agni as Mahānala Īśvara, the unseen creator and sustainer of cosmic evolution; he makes offerings, even beyond, to Agni as Saccidānanda connoting infinite existence, knowledge and bliss, in whom all sciences, all times, all Yajñas, all consciousnesses, all radiations and all actions find their consummation, but whose one place is the consecrated heart of man. For, He, the light that shines in the sun in the worlds, is yet the eye of the mortals as well as of the divinities. The philosophically minded truth-seeker finds a place in Him eventually.

The Upaniṣads tell us so much as the Yajurveda does of the qualityless (Nirguṇa) Brahman or Saccidānanda transcending the phenomenal structure of creation as immortal sweetness in three parts of His Immensity, while He pervades the complete creation in one part as Īśvara. Brahman, with His creation in its subtle and gross measures (Mātrās) i.e. with Prakṛti or Māyā, is described as Saguṇa (qualified) Brahman or Īśvara who is variously denominated as the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati, Hiraṇyagarbha or Taijas, and Prājña or Īśvara, ruling the rational life in its wakeful, dream and sleep states respectively. It is common with the Yajurveda to refer to this Saguṇa Brahman as Prajāpati or Agni and then to say that that very Prajāpati or Agni is Āditya (Sun), Vāyu (wind), Soma or Candramā (moon), Brahman, S'ukra (white, holy light) and Ap (waters). He is called even Bṛhaspati (lord of speech) and Manasaspati (lord of the mind). The names may differ, but the Vedic seers have in mind only one almighty Īśvara when they address hymns to Agni, Āditya, Soma, Indra, Varuṇa and other divinities, the various names standing only for the various functions signified by them; and this is the opinion of the illustrious interpreters of the Vedic thought with Maharṣi Dayānanda in their forefront.

The modes of the worship of Brahman or Reality differ indeed with different religions. The Zoroastrian religion advocates this worship on the altar of a sacred temple dedicated to Agni. Even so, the Vedic religion sanctions this worship with Agni on the altar of the household or in a Yajñaśālā where many congregate to celebrate the worship. It proposes even the Ādityamaṇḍala (the disc of the Sun) for the adorer to look up to for offering his prayers. The altar of Agni or the disc of the Sun merely supplies him the environment and gives the association of an atmosphere in which to meditate on the omniscient, luminous Essence. But there is something else that provides him the spirit to bring about his absorption in the Supreme Jyoti and this is the feeling stuff of the Vedic prayers that works enchantment in his heart prior to his absorption.

The Sāma hymns, as also the Ṛgveda and the Yajurveda Mantras, pregnant with inspired love, immensely help to the truthful and spiritually inclined adorer's indissoluble union with Agni, which was the one sacred longing of his heart. They help to the blaze of his sacrifice and of his heart at last. The little Yajña, that he first undertook with the offerings of clarified butter to separate divinites with Agni in their forefront for the fulfilment of his wordly desires, has now evolved into an eternal cosmic sacrifice for establishing Viśvakarmā, the Lord of all creation, on the pedestal of his heart. And he now approaches his Master Agni as Virāṭ Puruṣa with the ever-lasting offering of one unfailing understanding (Adābhyam haviḥ); and that understanding is that the senses of his knowledge, experiencing S'abda, Sparśa, Rūpa, Rasa and Gandha (word, touch, form, taste and smell) on the background of Ākāśa, Vāyu, Tejas, Ap and Pṛthivī (sky, wind, light, water and earth) respectively, constituting his material universe, have, at last, merged, along with his Mana (mind) and Buddhi (intellect), in the Lord's cosmic self.

After knowing so much about Agni, we may have, at this stage, a short summary of Agni's personality. The ancient

Vedic seers seem to believe that Agni holds a double function of being 'god in man and man in god'. He is conceived by the Yajurveda as a bridge between the mortal and the immortal worlds, receiving homage from both. No god can equal Him in granting stable residence (Vasu) and resources (Vasudhātama) to man and in inspiring him with the purity of mind (cetiṣṭaḥ). If other gods claim to oblige him with such blessings, they are only next to Agni. Hence, even if the flames of Agni in their phenomenal aspect are attended to with reverence and conceived as capable of leading the Yajña to the divine world, the Yajurveda gives accent on the suzerain leadership of this divine messenger of Brahman in the universe to help life evolve adequately in the spiritual direction. Again, the Yajurveda mentions Agni as no other than Hiraṇyagarbha, born of the all-enveloping divine waters (Bṛhatīḥ Āpaḥ), as the foremost among gods, nay as the very breath of divine life. Agni is indeed no other than Hiraṇyagarbha, the first product of these waters of infinite expanse which He saw enveloping all and bringing into existence beings, mortal and immortal. This Agni is that very worshipful Hiraṇyagarbha or Prajāpati, whose work is this extension of the heavens (Dyauḥ) and the solidifying of the earth and who keeps worlds revolving in the boundless space. The heavens and the earth (Krandasī), the Yajurveda says, have steadied their gaze reverentially on this very Agni as Hiraṇyagarbha whose one marvellous aspect is the Sun, supplying the nectar of life to worlds in an incessant act of upholding and protecting them. And that very Agni or Hiraṇyagarbha or Prajāpati supplies energy and life to human and divine beings with a word of command that they dare not disobey. Indeed, those save themselves that seek His protection (yasya chāyā amṛtam) in the opinion of the Yajurveda; those that do not, do so at their own peril and court the dominion of death (yasya mṛtyuḥ). The wise offer, therefore, their homage to Agni as their first leader. Vāyu, instinct with the law of truth, and Indra, the protector of the righteous (Satpati), are invited to give company to this omnipotent, immortal Agni in the Vedic Yajña to afford refuge, purification and instruction to the Yajamāna, so long as he counts his moments in symbolic time.

The Yajamāna has already bowed to such mighty Agni in the

Yajñas of different kinds, where His glorious train consisted of the goddesses Īḍā, Sarasvatī and Bhāratī and the gods Mitrā-varuṇa, Bṛhaspati and Aśvinas. Agni's golden sheen has held him spell-bound. Agni's Āhavanīya light (Prācinaṁ jyotiḥ) has impelled him to nobler actions and demanded his grateful obeisance. Agni has upheld his Yajña as the very light of Prajāpati and as the Aśva (all pervading essence) in His noblest transformation as Āditya. He has seen to the fulfilment of his Yajña with the representation of the highest of divinities. He has seen to the distribution of wealth, material and spiritual, among the needy. Agni, as Indra, has equipped the noble Kṣatriyas with armours that could blunt the sharpest of the weapons of the evil foe in upholding the cause of justice and humanity. He has added to the dignity of the mighty Kṣatriyas, who, seated securely in their chariots with bows strung, led unvanquishable legions, armed to the teeth, to oppose sinning marauders to usher the reign of peace and goodwill in the epochs of terror and devastation. And the Yajurveda says that it is surely Agni who has given man that faith and sense of worship, in happy acknowledgement of which the Pitṛs bless him, the Brāhmaṇas and Dyāvāpṛthivī (the heavens and the earth) radiate purification for him and Savitā (Sun) protects him from sin.

Agni is, therefore, conceived to be the one blissful and mighty friend of humanity, whose succour is sought in warding off evils and who holds out only the sweets of life in His phenomenal and spiritual aspects for man to foster in him a full sense of the Puruṣamedha Yajña. And finally the adorable, sin-cleaving light (Vareṇyam bhargaḥ) of Agni as the inspiring Savitā (Sun) is firmly held out to him by the Yajurveda for worship and meditation, in order that it may dispel the darkness of his understanding and be unto him an eternal refuge fraught with full and endless Existence (Sat), Knowledge (Cit) and Joy (Ānanda).

When adoration is thus perfected, it is worthwhile inquiring what is now the mental status of the adorer who began with the worship of Agni in the Vedic Yajñas.

The seven separate Vedic priests, conducting his Yajñas, have now lost for him their identity in Lord Agni as the High Priest of the cosmic Yajña. The seven separate flames of Agni, known to the Vedas, have now concealed themselves into 'the white radiance of eternity' for the seeker of truth. The seven Prāṇas, responsible for maintaining a living body, have hidden themselves now for him in one Mahā Prāṇa. The first-born seven sages, activising cosmic functioning, have been now lost for him in one Master-Sage or order and design. The seven planes significant of matter, space, radiation, intellect, deification, spiritual knowledge and ultimate truth (Bhūḥ, Bhuvaḥ, Svaḥ, Mahaḥ, Janaḥ, Tapaḥ and Satyam) have been now absorbed for him in the purifying, adorable essence (Vareṇyam bhargaḥ) of one inspiring Savitā. The seven fires viz. Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya, Dakṣiṇāgni, Sabhya, Āvasathya, Prājāhita and Āgnidhrīya, known to the Vedas, have now plunged themselves for him in one Mahānala (the Highest Fire). The seven Chandas (metres) of the Vedic lore have now dipped for him their separate constitutions into the poetry of the Eternal Word, Aum. The seven Maruts viz. S'ukrajyoti, Citrajyoti, Satyajyoti, Jyotiṣmān, S'ukra, Ṛtapā and Atyahnā have been now blown up for him to Sūtrātmā Vāyu (the universal thread). And the seven Vedic divinities viz. Ṛta, Satya, Dhruva, Dharuṇa, Dhartā, Vidhartā and Vidhāraya have now dissolved themselves into Ṛtam Bṛhat (the Highest Law) for this seeker of the Law. This is the unfailing conviction of one who has achieved the knowledge of objects as a unity in the cosmic self of his Master, Agni, who yet transcends the phenomena.

It is known to the truth-seeker at last that the nectarious wave of the worship of the Yajurveda Mantras rises high to catch the field of the immortal worship of the omniscient Agni as Saccidānanda, the Truth of the cosmos. None shall thwart for him, he knows, this graded rise of the Mantra worship; for, in the course of time, it crowns the Yajamāna with the purity of mind and heart (Antarhṛdā manasā pūyamānāḥ). The sublime worship lets the divine knowledge dawn on him, at last, that the Agni, whom he adored with the Vedic rites, is recognisable, in the course of his advanced worship, as none else but the Yajña Puruṣa — the Highest Being — in whom reposes the cosmos with its becomings in the infinite forms of both insentient objects and sentient creatures from the lowest species of life to the highest. And he tastes the immortal Brahmarasa in that ultimate conviction.

CHAPTER V

Where the Devayāna leads the evolved

We have come to the conception of Agni from His being a divine friend and guest of the Yajamāna at his earthly sacrifices of a material nature, performed to earn earthly prosperity, to that of Viśvakarmā or Prajāpati, the Lord of the universe. The connotation of Yajña in the later case has changed. This Yajña is Viśvatodhāra (upholding the universe) and the sacrificer has now no yearnings for worldly pleasures. He now wants to make ascension to the happy regions of eternal peace with detachment. He does not now want earthly wealth so much as he wants the divine wealth of enduring knowledge without a lapse. He wants purity and immortality above all. The conception of Agni has changed for him accordingly from being a personal deity to the Universal Mind as all pervading consciousness. Agni is now known to him in the infinite forms of life.

If, therefore, he wants his Agni to guarantee food for him, he also wants it to be guaranteed to humanity at large and to other creatures, and looks up to the mother earth as the divine Mother Aditi — as proud (Adīnā) and whole (Akhaṇḍitā) — to whose wholesome bounties, he feels, all her children have a proud and undivided privilege for honourable living as he has. And he prays to the inspiring Lord Savitā that he be upheld in purity and love with his fellows on this earth which lends room to all creatures to live upon. This is the law of his food-sharing. His is not now a course of self-aggrandisement. He has become a philanthropist above all. If he believes in such a creed now as a religious duty with his refined understanding of his Yajña as the Viśvatodhāra Yajña, the noble Āryan traditions in which he has been brought up have themselves played their helpful role as much as his religion in stimulating his love of a generous and honourable life.

The ancient Āryans indeed loved to enjoy life, but they wished others also to enjoy it. Guests were freely welcome at the Yajamāna's dining hall unlike in a modern home with the householder's individualistic culture. He shared his belongings with a frankness of heart which the modern, so-called civilised man cannot think of with his contumely and sense of aloofness. He did celebrate sacrifices, but they were also social festivals where the learned and the needy and the poor were fed and clothed respectfully. There were plentiful grains and enough milk, clarified butter and honey. Invitations were sent, guests assembled and one and all feasted on the dishes together without reserve. The high status of guests that is scrupulously thought of in issuing invitations in these days was no bar to admission to his social gathering. Hoarding was not his code-word.

The Āryans believed in a wealth that could be always shared, and in a roof under which all could take shelter. And though they loved to fight out their just cause bravely, sometimes even violently at the risk of their lives, there was warmth of love in their hearts for friends and they were never cheats making lip-professions of sympathy.

If a good Āryan ruler celebrated a Yajña, it had a countrywide publicity and the sanction of all the subjects that took part in it. The king Mahāvijit once performed a sacrifice.[1] The Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas and the ministers — all permitted it. The king made no reckoning of the wealth he possessed; he spent it freely without a thought for the future. He entertained both the non-violent and the violent, the honest and the dishonest, the disciplined and the profligate, the soft-hearted and the cruel, the reserved and the garrulous, the restrained and the greedy, the affectionate and the revengeful, the detached and the worldly, and the sweet-tempered and the harsh. He tolerated all and behaved courteously with all on the occasion. Lord Buddha, in one of his previous incarnations, was the principally officiating priest of the king at the Yajña.

The Somayāga, the Rājasūya Yajña and the Aśvamedha Yajña were conspicuous among the royalties. There was no starvation and no rationing of food-materials. If Agni was worshipped and offered libations as a divinity at the Yajña, the fire in the pit of a poor man's stomach was satisfied too. There were kings, possessing tolerance and rectitude, like the King Ambarīṣa who would not break his sacred fast of the Ekādaśī (the eleventh day of the bright and dark halves of a month) for many a day and would thus risk his life, only because the angry sage Durvāsā would not turn up at the right hour on the next day for being served first as the holy guest.[2] Such was the order of the royalty in ancient Bhārata.

The democratic Āryans also met together, conferred with one mind, and respected their scriptures, and the rights and privileges enjoined upon them by the scriptures. They respected the women-folk and the old, and worshipped the deities and the Gurus. For such qualities possessed by a handful of the Licchavis in the principality of Vaiśālī, Varṣakāra, the prime minister of the suzerain king Ajātaśatru of Magadha, had to abandon his idea of attacking them under Lord Buddha's advice.[3] The Rāmāyaṇa's great Rāma courted forest-life in complete abandonment of the throne of Ayodhyā in favour of his step-brother Bharata to uphold his father Daśaratha's vow to his step-mother Kaikeyī, and maintained the joint-family life intact. The Mahābhārata's illustrious Kṛṣṇa married 16,000 girls imprisoned in the tyrant Narakāsura's gaol, and saved, in that way, their prestige in society, lest they should be refused for marriage by others. Bhīṣma of the great martial fame of the Mahābhārata remained a celibate for life, to set aside the apprehension of the freakish father of his step-mother Satyavatī that her natural son's right to the throne might be some day jeopardized by one of Bhīṣma's line after her husband's death.[4] Vidura abandoned his royal home and led the life of a recluse to show his disgust for scheming Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana who unjustly kept out the good Pāṇḍavas from the throne of Hastināpura — nay even from a small landed property in the kingdom.[5] Damayantī[6] and Sītā,[7] delicate princesses, accustomed only to the sweets of life, followed their husbands to forests to uphold their right to share life with them in adversity as honourable wives, wedded to them in one indissoluble union.

Such was the philanthropy and such were the spiritual, social and political ideas of the great ancient Āryans. Such was their sense of fair play. Such was their sacrifice to save a woman's honour. Such were the vows of the sacred wedlock. Such were their team-spirit, fellow-feeling and love for comrades. What good they wanted for themselves, they would be ever ready to vouch for to others. They would be ever ready to court disaster to preserve domestic and social equilibrium. The moderns should learn to eradicate their silent rage, their contempt for coloured races and their deeply cherished grudge and opportunism to make a right approach to the creed of non-violence before they impeach the ancient Āryans of wading through violence. For, we do not know how fatal the atomic warfare might be, if but once fanned up by a dubious diplomacy, which the heroic but soft-cornered ancient Āryans abjured in their vast love for man, their civilisation, and for their dear earth. If they colonised to assure them a home to live in, they freely inter-married among the indigenous coloured races and absorbed them in their folds along with their institutions, thus making the world they knew a federated family-unit.

With such noble traditions working unconsciously in the Yajamāna, and with his understanding of life rendered further generous by his new conception Yajña as a process of sharing his belongings with his fellow-brethren rather than of appropriating them solely to himself, he now goes a step forward. It is not the nourishment of only humans with food and drink on earth (Bhūḥ) that the Yajamāna desires now, but he wants that all other beings in the rest of the cosmic regions also should be satisfied. He wants to be a cosmic donor of food and his vast generosity impels him ultimately to identify himself with cosmic life. That is his understanding of Yajña under the inspiration of Savitā. He knows Agni at this stage as the manifester of love, truth and immortality ; he recognises Sūrya as full-fledged Sāma or Prāṇa breathing strength and inspiration ; he believes Vāyu to be all-pervading to oblige all ; and he is convinced that the Universal Mind is the unseen Creator who wants the whole cosmic life to be satisfied. He has a feeling that they all help learning (Brahma) and heroism (Kṣatra) to thrive for attuning humanity to the highest pitch of civilisation. He cherishes a longing, therefore, that he should help to the realisation of this objective with his sense of Yajña and ultimately merge with his fellows into the eternity of All-Life, All-Mind and All-Joy beyond the happy regions of the paradise (Adhinākam uttamam — Jyotir uttamam). And it is in this merging of purified human life in Paramātmā for absolute release (Mokṣa or Nirvāṇa) that we find the highest Vedic ideal of liberation. This ideal is in advance of that of some other religions of the world that stop with heaven ; for, the highest conceptions of the human happiness of phenomenal values stop there and nothing that can be conceived by the human mind can be set forth to describe that state of Being (Neti neti).

This objective renders the Āryan life prone to go beyond the sense of the highest human possession in happy renunciation. This ideal is instrumental in man's reaching dispassion and consequent detachment. Yājñavalkya gives an account[8] of that ineffable state of Being to the king Janaka in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. He says that that Being is present as intelligence in Prāṇa and in the space of the heart. That Being rules all. It does not add to Its stature with good work nor diminish it with bad work. It preserves all. It is a bridge unifying all worlds. The learned have a Vedic injunction to know It with the sense of Yajña, with gifts (Dāna), penance (Tapa) and desirelessness. Once It is known, Yājñavalkya says, a man becomes a silent thinker (Muni). He becomes a recluse in the hope of merging into It permanently and of thus being freed from the law of Karma that demands a return to the life of the earth. The ancient sages did not desire progeny, wealth and paradise, for the Being was all in all to them. That Being is Ātmā, says Yājñavalkya, and It cannot be caught. It cannot be cut. It does not grieve. It cannot be destroyed. It transcends both good and evil. A man, knowing It, therefore, becomes quiet and collected and desireless with his senses subdued in rich mental composure. Everything is Ātmā for him thenceforward. He conquers evil and becomes pure; his doubts are removed. He becomes a fearless Brāhmaṇa in the real sense of the word with the knowledge of Brahman. This Being, says Yājñavalkya, is not subject to birth and death; It knows not disease and fear.

When Maitreyī asks her husband Yājñavalkya how she can attain that immortal Being or Ātmā, he explains[9] that It cannot be attained through wealth. Persons and things are held dear by man for the sake of Ātmā and therefore, he says, Ātmā's real nature should be understood; then only they are known in their true perspective, not till then. For explaining that nature, he compares Ātmā to a drum whose beats are understood only on the background of the drum; not otherwise. He explains again that the vibrating music of a lute and the blowing of a conch-shell can be appreciated only on the backgrounds of the lute and the conch-shell respectively; even so phenomena could be rightly understood, says Yājñavalkya, only on the realisation of Ātmā. He instructs that all sciences and worlds are the breath of this Mighty Being (Mahataḥ Bhūtasya). This Being or Ātmā is declared to be imperceptible in phenomena. As with salt dissolved in water, the water only tastes of the unseen salt, similarly the whole phenomenal life is said to be pregnant with imperceptible Ātmā or Prajñāna (All-knowledge). This Ātmā, says Yājñavalkya, is the synthesis of all as the sea of all waters; as the skin of all touches; as the nose of all smells: as the tongue of all tastes; as the mind of all ideas; as the heart of all learnings and as the speech (Vāk) of all the Vedas. Ātmā is all one eternal Existence, says Yājñavalkya, without duality and difference. The sense of another is experienced by man only with the partitioned understanding of his mind through sense-perceptions. But when everything is experienced as Ātmā, who else would remain apart to experience another ? Ātmā is instrumental, instructs Yājñavalkya, in making the very act of knowing possible. It cannot, therefore, be perceived as phenomena. The person whose understanding blossoms into this omniscience no longer remains a separated unit to observe things in differences; for he is one with that All-Knowledge, says Yājñavalkya in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. We talk of that status as Adhinākam uttamam or Jyotir uttamam in the language of the Yajurveda.

All this highest attainment by man from which there is no fear of fall, says the seer of the Yajurveda, is possible with the first beginnings of the adoration of Agni, because the adorer belongs to this earth as his material, phenomenal body. Agni is central in the matter of the earth of which that body is composed and Agni is also the essence of water and vegetation that nourish the body. That very Agni, as the crest of the heavens as Sūrya, lays bare, before His adorer, life as light in its spiritual significance and leads him after death by the Devayāna (the path of illumination), says the Yajurveda, to the light of the Sun (Svarjyoti) and thence to the eternal home of endless bliss (Nāka) as universal life (Viśvāyu). Agni opens up the gates of eternal life to His adorer in this way, according to the instruction of the Yajurveda, by the Devayāna.

The course of a liberated Jīvātmā is explained[10] in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad in detail. The Upaniṣad says that the Jīvātmā of a person who has adored truth during his life on earth obtains the Agnijyoti after death. It obtains the day and the bright half of the moon. It obtains the Uttarāyaṇa (the six months when the sun has a northward movement). Then the Jīvātmā obtains the paradise of the gods. Thence it proceeds to the Āditya Maṇḍala (the world of the Sun) and thence to the Vidyulloka (the world of lightning). The Upaniṣad proceeds to say further that a Mānasa Puruṣa (an immaterial person of the nature of pure mind) leads the Jīvātmā from the Vidyulloka to the Brahmaloka (the world of Brahman), whence there is no return (Na punarāvṛttiḥ). This Brahmaloka is also the Satyaloka of the Upaniṣads and the Nāka of the Yajurveda.

It will now be noted how the Vedic conception of the ultimate spirit-world is not only in advance of man's spiritual journey to the paradise of the gods as known to some other religions of the world, but also in advance of the scientific conception of the materialists which has it that a person's material body is ultimately dissolved into electrical particles. We see how. We read int he holy scriptures that the impressions of the wordly thoughts of a person constitute the Liṅga S'arīra or the Jīvabhāva of a Jīvātmā. These impressions, it may be argued, may then persist so far as the region of the ultimates of matter persists i.e. up to the Vidyulloka or the world of electric energy. But we learn that the Jīvātmā, passing onwards, loses that Jīvabhāva and becomes a form of unsullied consciousness, which is implied in the description of its escort, the Mānasa Puruṣa, in its journey to Brahmaloka. For, Brahman is, above all, the Universal Mind; and now the pure Ātmā of a person who has left his Jīvabhāva and is only pure mind cannot be different from the Universal Mind. That is the view that we can take even from the standpoint of the modern idealistic science, which believes that there is Mind behind the operations of matter. When, therefore, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad instructs that this Highest Mind is reached by a purified Jīvātmā as mind without phenomenal impressions, the mind of an individual who has lost his individuality can easily be conceived as having merged in the Universal Mind.

The conception of Bernard Shaw of a spiritually advanced life is also that of a pure idea or mind. In his great drama 'Back to Methuselah', we read that Pygmalion exhibits the specimens of two artificial human beings, which great intellectuals have assembled to witness. The king Ozimandias and the queen Cleopatra — Semiramis, — the pair style themselves so — , that are called upon to act their parts, are shown to be the products of science. Pygmalion is said to have manufactured those lives in his laboratory. The life in the royal couple is not, therefore, the natural life of human beings as they are born in Nature's laboratory. They proceed to speak, and the devil appears to quote scriptures when they first make professions, on the stage, of their "glory equal" and "majesty co-eternal", but fall out next and the queen kills Pygmalion with her venomous bite for his intervention. Then two sages — "ancients" they are called — come forward to destroy those conscious, lying automata of science that lack the milk of human sympathy and truth which are present in the natural life of human beings. The sages, having done their work, explain to the audience that the life, manufactured in the laboratory of science, however marvellous it may appear, cannot come up to the level of the natural life. They finally declare that immaterial thought or immortality or the "life-eternal" is the highest destiny to which that natural life on earth can advance as the end of its spiritual advancement.[11] This Mind is the S'ukrajyoti or the Satyajyoti or the Ṛtapā (the keeper of the law of Truth) of the Yajurveda, as we understand.

The Vedic instruction of obtaining that law of Truth through sacrifice, gifts, austerities and knowledge has emanated from that very Law. The first-born sages viz. Kapila, Vasiṣṭha, Bharadvāja, Jamadagni, Viśvāmitra, Sanatkumāra and Sunandana obtained that Law, and the initiated adorer, following in their footsteps, should have the attainment of it as his highest aim, as the seer instructs. We cannot but marvel at the stipulation of the realisation of this Supreme Law as the highest ambition of the Yajamāna in the last measure, when, we are told, after his adoration reaches consummation, the person, realising this Law becomes aware that he is omniscient Agni himself by birth, that he himself is the immortal Sun and the Creator of worlds, and that he himself is the offering offered to Agni. He then knows, instructs the seer, that he himself is the Yajurveda, the Ṛgveda and the Sāmaveda. This is indeed his attainment of the non-dual world of Ātmā which the Upaniṣads show as his highest fruit through Ātmajñāna (the realisation of Ātmā). We understand then that the attainment of this majesty of Ātmā is the highest fruit of the Vedic Yajña, presided over by Agni, Indra, Brahmā and Bṛhaspati who are conceived as the incarnations of knowledge operating for filling the gaps of human frailties in the uniform life of Ātmā.

And how are those gaps filled ? The Yajurveda prescribes the means and contemplates the progressive mental regeneration of the adorer by his utilising those means. His Vrata (observance of a vow), as against self-indulgence, gives him Dīkṣā (initiation) in the life of detachment. This initiation, again, inspires him to give away things to the needy as Dakṣiṇā (donations). This sense of parting with material possessions, as against the sense of foolish hoarding by the ignorant, gives him a glimpse into the life of Truth as S′raddhā (faith) and he attains Satya (Truth) through that faith. It is clearly said that this is the form of Yajña visualised by the divinities and Brahman. Attainment of Satya by the purification of mind is the ultimate note sounded by the Yajurveda even with the ordinary Yajña-form of worship. Pure Brahman is recorded to be present in the flames of Agni by the S′.Y.S. A. 19 M. 41 and purity of knowledge is, therefore, thought as the very life of Agni in His flames. This purity of knowledge is also considered to be the essence of the inspiration of Savitā in His rays. Hence the worship of Brahman, with the worship of Agni and the worship of the Sun as Nitya (compulsory) Yajña, is enjoined on an adorer as a means for that purification prior to his initiation into the mental worship (Mānasa Yajña) in the form of meditation.

We have also the two celebrated Vedic paths that are specified as leading such adorers to the regions merited by their adoration after death. These paths are the Devayāna or Arcirmārga (the path of illumination) and the Pitṛyāṇa or Dhūmamārga (the path of gloom) for mortals to obtain after death. The first, the

Devayāna, which we have already treated, is obtained through Jñāna (knowledge) resulting in the purification of mind, where the changeful values of life have ceased to weigh. Jñāna, again, makes room in the heart of man for the joy of the universal life rather than of the individual life, and, as such, it leads, as we have seen, to eternal life-joy in a disembodied state in the Brahmaloka. The second path, the Pitṛyāṇa, leads to the continuation of the life of partitioned consciousness with the result that the Jīvātmā of a person is born again and again on earth to experience those values of human life that spring from the narrow vision of obtaining sensuous gratifications, of personal possessions aṇd of self-glorification. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad describes the journey of such a Jīvātmā after death by the Pitṛyāṇa or Dhūmamārga in a picturesque way. The Upaniṣad says that the Jīvātmā on this way obtains smoke on death instead of the Agnijyoti that the traveller by the Devayāna obtains. It then obtains the night and the dark half of the moon. It passes on thence to the Dakṣiṇāyana (the six months when the sun has a southward movement). Then, instead of obtaining the heaven of the gods and thence the sphere of the Sun like the Jīvātmā travelling by the Devayāna, it enters the world of the dead Pitṛs (forefathers) and thence the sphere of the the Moon, where it becomes the food of the gods. The Jīvātmā then comes down to the earth as food passing through the space and the air and the rain. As food, it is eaten by human beings and it becomes human seed for being born as a human child. The Jīvatmā's rounds of births and deaths continue with this path of gloom, the Dhūmamārga as it is so significantly called; but, as it profits more and more by the Vedic instruction and encompasses its rise with Dīkṣā, S'raddhā and Jñāna in human life, the Devayāna is opened up to it.

So long as a person does not obtain this path of illumination (Devayāna), he wishes his compeers well for a hundred years' prosperous life and makes offerings to his noble dead ancestors, residing in the Yamarājya (the kingdom of the god of death), out of love and respect for them. He would worship Agni till then at the material Yajñas praying for his well-being, for enough food and drink, and for progeny, wealth and cattle. He would crave so long for the blessings of the ancestral line of Aṅgiras, Atharvan, Bhṛgu and Vasiṣṭha. All this time, however, he belongs to the theatre of Kāma (desire), witnessing the scenes of sorrow and change, and is beyond the hold of faith in Truth which alone reveals Reality to an eternal vision. And exactly, therefore, it is his lot to grieve and pray to Agni for the atonement of the sins which, he believes, he has committed to divinities, and pray to Vāyu to release him from the consequences of the wrong he has done during the day and at night. He grieves and prays to Sūrya to ward off the visitations of bad luck consequent upon the perpetration of evil during his wakeful and dream conditions. He grieves and prays that all his unsocial acts of commission and omission in populated places and in solitary forests, in assemblies and in scenes of self-indulgence, be excused. He grieves and prays to Varuṇa to disentangle him from the evil effects of killing those that he should not have killed and takes holy baths to remove his hard fetters of phenomenal life.

At long last, however, as the Yajurveda instructs, Agni as Vratapati (the regulator of the law of Karma) wakes up his S'raddhā (faith) after a trying ordeal of adjustments in the field of action in human life and lifts him up to the holy world of thought where knowledge (Brahma) and heroism (Kṣatra) are welded together in a fragrant, infallible joy-experience. Aud there he will sense the ecstatic Sāma Music and the victorious Light to learn the lessons of immortality. He is gradually led on to Paramātmā who rules the Mahat (the subtle Nature and her elements constituting worlds) and who graciously helps the human mind to forgo the consolations of the flesh. Here, in this sweet experience, he draws the breath of respite and begins to be deeply interested in the purifying phenomena of Nature such as a glorious sunrise, dissipating the gloom of night in the east, which is poetically conceived as Indra killing the demon Vṛtra. The phenomenon drives a wedge in his gross mental pictures and makes him think of the celebrated Vedic prayer 'Tamaso mā jyotir gamaya (Oh Lord, lead me to light from darkness).' He, in the course of time, begins to appreciate the sound and the sense of a few more enrapturing Vedic supplications to Paramātmā to lead him away from death to immortality (Mṛtyor mā amṛtatvaṁ gamaya) and from untruth to truth (Anṛtān mā satyam gamaya).

His idea of Agni thus becomes richer as cosmic life and, at last, as Satyajyoti (the light of Truth). Indra is now no longer his hero assuring him only personal protection, but the Viśvapā (universal protector).[12] Varuṇa now changes his orbit from being the deity of plants to that of the refulgent law of Truth (Ādityavrate) inviting the awakened to purity (Anāgasaḥ) and eternal prosperity (Aditaye). Savitā now no longer appeals to him as obliging only the earth, the space and the heavens with His light, but also as the inspirer of cosmic life with endless light of knowledge. Sarasvatī is now no longer thought of as the divine wife of the Aśvinas and the mother of Indra, but as purifying and nourishing cosmic intellect that inspires the righteous to cosmic sacrifice, and connoting universal learning that vitalises the ocean of this Saṁsāra (universe). And Rudra now rises from his conception of being a divinity of destruction to that of being the destroyer of evil and the donor of spiritual bliss (S'iva, S'ivatara).

The blessings of the illustrious dead ancestors are not now invoked by the adorer for a round of worldly prosperity, but for strengthening his genuine grasp of phenomena in their relation to Ātmā. How does his ancestor Atharvaṇa respond to him, for example, in this regard? He holds out his Madhuvidyā (the lore of honeyed sweetness)[13] for the adorer's spiritual awakening. The beautiful instruction is given in the Upaniṣads. It explains to the adorer that phenomena are co-ordinated with Paramātmā in the eternal bond of sweetness. This earth, the Madhuvidyā instructs, is honey for all creatures and all creatures are honey for the earth; for, the immortal, refulgent Puruṣa, pervading the earth as its Antaryāmī (Inner Controller), is the same as the Puruṣa in the mortal frame, and both the Puruṣas are not different from Brahman or Ātmā or a 'thing in itself'. The water, the Madhuvidyā proceeds to say, is honey for all beings and all beings are honey for the water; for the immortal, luminous soul regulating the water is that same Brahman as the spirit in the seed. Fire and living creatures breathe out to each other that same honeyed co-ordination, for the controlling Ātmā in fire is said to be the same Brahman that appears to abide in speech. And, in that manner, the cosmic wind is co-ordinated to Prāṇa in living bodies with a sweetness that is uniform in Brahman, vitalising both. The Āditya (Sun) Puruṣa, the Madhuvidyā instructs, is the same sweet Brahman as the Cākṣuṣa (eye) Puruṣa of the living, and the spirit at the heart of the quarters is the same sweet Paramātmā that permits the ear to hear. The luminous, immortal Puruṣa in the moon and that in mind are explained in that manner as not different from the almighty, immortal Ātmā. The soul of lightning is thus said to be the same as that in bodily lustre, as sweet, immortal Brahman. The spirit hidden in thunder is, in that manner, described to be the same sweet Ātmā that is inherent in melody ; and one uniform and honeyed Ātmā, it is instructed, pervades the cosmic space and the space in the heart. The soul of Dharma (law), even so, is said to govern the duty-notions of man as the same immortal Brahman that lends sweetness to both. And man, at last, is represented as honey for all other living creatures and the latter, as honey for him, because of the truth that the same immortal Inner Controller rules them both. This conviction sweetens the life-plan of the adorer and his egoistic notions are happily brushed away by the Madhuvidyā. Such is the way in which he reaps the benefit of his prayers to his illustrious Pitṛs.

The progressive conception of Yajña as all-pervading immortal Viṣṇu or Brahman, gives him a happy conviction that the same Ātmā pervades all in the universe as their ruler. He, therefore, ceases to grieve with the permanent sense dawning on him that all living organisms, all gods, all worlds and all cosmic life, subtle or manifested, are upheld in that very same Ātmā as the spokes of the wheel in its circumference. Whole-hearted sympathy with life, wherever that life is found, and selflessness become his immortal treasure thenceforward. If he is in society in the actual field of action as a social unit, selfless service becomes his rule of life, whether that field is large or small. If the unknown factor of evolution that governs his life removes him from society to worship his Lord only as a silent thinker like Maharṣi Ramaṇa of Tiruvannamalai in southern Bhārata, then the same broad sympathy and selfless outlook are his sovereign merits that inspire his admirers to comprehend the sense of real worship.

We shall also summarise in the vein of thought in the Bhagavad-Gītā, the evolving connotation of Yajña for a progressive sacrificer in humanity ; for his response to that gradual refinement in worship governs his sense of fruit. In the initial stages when animal passions governed him, he wanted to pocket the whole universe for his ready service; with the sudden flash, however, of the sense of real worship, dawning on him to dispel the darkness of that treacherous misconception, he wants nothing now from the universe but would rather give away what he has.

The Bhagavad-Gītā recounts the Yajñas of the five categories.[14] They are availed of by men according to the stages of spiritual evolution they have reached. First come the material sacrifices (Dravyayajñas), like the Agniṣṭoma and the Somayāga, which are undertaken by some with a wealth of libations of the material type for diverse divinities to obtain grace from them for their wordly advancement. The next comes the penance-type of Yajna (Tapoyajña). Observances are kept with periodic bathing, fasting and abstinence, and gifts are given to the needy and the meritorious to seek expiation from sin by those persons who go in for this kind of Yajña. The third category is the Yogayajña, wherein the Yogīs start regulating their senses by their disuse, observing utter silence and shunning the objects of senses. They regulate their Prāṇa with the practice of inhalation (Pūraka), retention (Kumbhaka) and exhalation (Recaka) as stipulated by the code of Prāṇāyama. The Svādhyāya Yajña (the Yajña of the study-type) is the fourth in the series. Control of mind is undertaken by those that practise this kind of Yajña with the cultivation of necessary habits of dispassion in various fields of activities, and more and more light is sought by them with study and meditation and detachment. The fifth and the last is the Jñānayajña (knowledge-type of Yajña), which aims at the cultivation of desirelessness in a person, who must leave his craving for wordly prosperity and do whatever he will with the sense of selfless service. The Jñānāyogī does not want worldly consolations. His work is not the product of conceit, but that of duty. He thus becomes desireless. His mind is regulated. He stops enlisting others' labour for his self-interest. He works, because the body must. He is satisfied with whatever he gets and tries to go beyond the dualities of life. He leaves egoism with a sharp cut. He does his work as a matter of duty and remains balanced in mind in its measure of success or defeat. He has broken his ties of attachment. He seeks release from the symbolic values of life with a mind for obtaining supreme consciousness. And in this last and the best of Yajñas, Brahman is the Agni and Brahman is the oblation; the thinker's work and mind are Brahman and he attains Brahman. And Brahman is Supreme Knowledge. All work ends there. The cycle of births and deaths ceases there. That is the highest fruit of the Yajña wherein the Yajamāna's Yajña and its fruit are one and indivisible from Brahman. That is the destination to which the Devayāna leads the spiritually regenerated worshipper with his background of noble Āryan traditions and sense of progressive Agni-worship with Dīkṣā, S'raddhā and Jñāna.

CHAPTER VI

The Vedas and the Yajñas

THE VEDAS signify the spiritual knowledge of the progressive conception of Yajña for the comprehension of the sense of real worship of Paramātmā with a whole-hearted sympathy for life in which nature is one with man, and we have seen in the last chapter where such knowledge leads the evolved adorer. The Vedas are considered to be the word of God, and the Ṛṣis, in whose names the hymns in the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda stand, are understood to be the revealers of these hymns rather than their composers. These three Vedas consist of the Saṁhitā, the Brāhmaṇa, and the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. The Saṁhitā is the Mantra portion; the Brāhmaṇa is the exposition of the Mantras; and the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads claim to give the philosophical truth which is their substratum. The Ṛgveda Saṁhitā is metrical in structure, the metres employed being Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubh, Jagatī, Anuṣṭup etc. Many hymns of the Ṛgveda — Ṛcās they are called — are found in the Yajurveda Saṁhitā expressed in the prose of a high poetic order. The famous Puruṣa Sūkta, contained in the Adhyāya 31 in the Vājasaneyī Mādhyandina S'ukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā with which we are dealing, is taken without any change from the Ṛgveda and has the majesty of the celebrated Nāsadīya Sūkta of the Ṛgveda. When the Ṛcās of the Ṛgveda are musically sung, they become Sāma hymns.

We have the three priests (Ṛtvijas) responding to the three Vedas to conduct the ceremony at a sacrifice. The Hotā recites the Ṛgveda Ṛcās; the Adhvaryu recites the Yajurveda Mantras and offers libations (Āhuti) in the Agni; and the Udgātā sings the Sāma hymns. They carry their functions under the supervision of the Brahmā-priest who is proficient in all the three Vedas and sees to the faultless performance of the ceremony and rectifies the mistakes of the three when they happen.

We are concerned in this book with a short account of a few prominent forms of the Yajñas which are taken note of by the Vājasaneyī Mādhyandina S'ukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā. This Saṁhitā contains 40 Adhyāyas including 1975 Mantras. The Vedic Yajñas are fundamentally divisible into two varieties. The first is the Nitya Yajña, which is enjoined upon a Brāhmaṇa or a Kṣatriya as a part of his daily duties. The second is the Kāmya Yajña, which is voluntary. We consider the first. The householder keeps the Agnihotra and worships the three Agnis, viz. the Gārhapatya Agni connected with the family of the household, the Āhavanīya Agni connected with divinities and the Dakṣiṇāgni connected with the ancestors of the family that are dead. The ancient Āryans believed in the joint-family system and revered the dead ancestors in a traditional way still as a part and parcel of the family, invoked their blessings and wished them better and better worlds from the Yamaloka (the world of the god of death) where they are conceived to go first after their death. So they perform the Devayajña and the Pitṛyajña also. A student had to finish his education, as Kṛṣṇa and Sudāmā did, under a preceptor (Guru). At the time of returning home, he had to kindle Agni for worship in the Gurukula; he brought it home and set it up as the Gārhapatya Agni to be kept always burning. This ceremony is known as Agnyādhāna. The station of the Gārhapatya Agni is to the west of the sacrificial altar. The Āhavanīya Agni is to the east and the Dakṣiṇāgni, to the south of the altar. The eastern and the southern directions signify the abodes of the divinities and the Pitṛs (dead ancestors) respectively. The adoration with Arghya (water-offering) to Lord Savitā and concentration mainly on the Gāyatrī Mantra constitute the Brahmayajña. Fortnightly Yajñas known as the Darśapaurṇamāsa Yajña on the Pūrṇimā and the Amāvāsyā days (the fifteenth days of the bright and dark halves of a month respectively) and the Ṛtuyajña (seasonal sacrifices) along with the Agnihotra worship, morning and evening, are conducted with the offerings of cow-milk, clarified butter, raw grain and cooked food. This worship of Agni and Savitā constitutes the Nitya Yajña.

The householder promises to Agni, the law-keeper, that he would keep the vow of truth. He beseeches Him to give him necessary strength for its observance and begs that he be lifted up from Ānṛta (untruth) to Satya (truth). He prays that Agni as Dhūh (the destroyer) destroy the destroying agencies (Dhūrvantam) and bear him on to truth as the highest escort (Vahnitama); cleanse his impurities as the highest purifier (Sasnitama); redeem his lapses as the highest fulfiller (Papritama); keep him pleased in bearing the brunt of life as the most pleased (Juṣṭatama); and call him up to divine life as the highest invoker of divinities (Devahūtama). He invokes Him for strengthening his charitable disposition (Bhūtāya), not miserliness (Na arātaye), with the express purpose that he may see his Yajña grow and render him vast as the space (Uru antarikṣam anvemi). This entreaty of the householder to Agni for his spiritual regeneration can be best expressed in the words of Gītāñjali :

"This is my prayer to thee, my Lord, — strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart. Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows. Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service. Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might. Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles. And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love." This is a glorious prayer from the mighty pen of Rabindranath Tagore.[1]

Praying to Agni, the adorer touches the blades of the Darbha grass for purifying him. He believes that he has breathed inspiration from Lord Savitā and purity from his rays and from the purifying Vāyu. He then entreats the divine waters to lead him and his Darśapaurṇamāsa Yajña forward to purity. He prays that his sacrificial equipment like bowls, pounding instruments, wooden sticks and deer-leather seat also breathe purity.

He resolves that the Agni on the altar transcends the earthly fire (Āmāda), the fire of the funeral pyre (Kravyāda) and brings the divine Agni (Devayaja) in his proximity for reverential worship by the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas and his fold. He worships Agni for stabilising the cosmic regions as a noble upholder and for destroying those persons that offend the law of good life. He prays that the divine waters experience sweet unity with vegetation and that his offerings of Ājya (clarified butter) and Puroḍāśa (bread) assure him long life with happy progeny. He exalts the Skya (a hatchet to dig earth for the altar) to the status of the mighty right hand of Indra capable of annihilating the malignant influences (Dviṣataḥ). He exults in addressing his Vedi (altar) as a happy refuge for divine worship. He begs that he may never destroy the roots of plants. He feels the promise that the worship at the Vedi would bring a happy monsoon and that, while good thrives, evil shall be in bondage with the grace of Lord Savitā. And all this he feels and believes, for he knows that all-pervading Lord Viṣṇu is Yajña incarnate with His word of the Vedas and believes that the Vedi of the worship is the incarnation of Pṛthivī, the abode of life. It should be remembered here that we have already treated the Iṣṭakā, constructing the Vedi, as the representative of matter and have reviewed it scientifically in the body of the book on a suitable occasion. Here the Vedi is conceived to be Pṛthivī (the earth) as the abode of life and the Yajña as Lord Viṣṇu, whose divine word as the Vedic Mantras accompanies the worship in the Darśapaurṇamāsa Yajña.

When the holy water is, therefore, offered in prayer, it accompanies the mighty conception of the adorer that he offers it to the Lord Creator of the universe and of all beings (Bhūpataye, Bhuvanapataye, Bhūtānāṁ pataye). The Palāśa sticks are set up there as the seats of the Gandharvas, Indra and Mitrāvaruṇa for the well-being of the whole universe, and the whole fuel of the holy sticks (Samidh) goes to kindle for him the omniscient Agni of his conception. The Darbha grass is spread as the arms of Lord Savitā. The offerings are conceived as being eternal under the protection of Lord Viṣṇu. Salutations go out to the gods and the ancestors with the majestic conception of Yajña as all-pervading Yajñapuruṣa or Bṛhaspati or Brahman whose glory is sung with the names of Agni, Savitā and Indra. Pṛthivī, invoked there, is always as mother and Dyauḥ (heavens), as father; and the Yajamāna swallows the remnants of food offerings (Haviśeṣa) with their express command. He wishes that the Yajña carries satisfaction and joy to the whole divine life in its varied aspects as the Vasus, the

Rudras, the Maruts, the Viśvedevas, Aditi, Sarasvatī and the like. Svāhā and Vāṭ are the mystic words conveying offerings to that divine life. What a happy culmination of his noblest ambition is reached when the holy word of God (Veda) is supplicated to know him as it knows the gods, and when the whole Yajña is besought to rest with the lord of the mind (Manasaspati) ! Spirituality of values is his real craving in this undertaking; for the Lord of the Yajña is supplicated to stabilise it in immense Vāyu or Prāṇa which is the emblem of disembodiment and immortality (Vāyur anilam amṛtam). And, while his hands move with the act of offering, and mouth with the utterance of the holy words of the Vedic Mantras, his mind aspires to reach immortal good (Manasā saṁśivena).

With such a ceremony and thrilled spirit, the Yajurveda says, the Yajamāna obtains the immortal conviction that he is one with the all-knowing Jyoti (light) of Savitā who stands in the heavens as self-born Hiraṇyagarbha for the dispensation of genuine, illuminating knowledge to evolved life (Prajā). He begged Agni as the lord of the vow of truth (Vratapati) to stand him well during the performance of the Darśapaurṇamāsa Yajña; he has now realised his objective. His joy is greater; for, as a faithful son of the family, he has not forgotten to offer libations to his ancestors and has prayed to the divine waters (Āpaḥ) to carry to them that humble Svadhā in their judicious distribution of food and drink and of immortality above all.

The readers will now see, with this supplement of the import of the Mantras for the Nitya Yajña to that given in Chapter I, what an immense importance the ancient Āryans attributed to the satisfaction of the divine life and to the life of their Pitṛs so as to inspire them to do their duty with strength and straightforwardness in the work-a-day world. They were saved thus from an immodest approach to life so remarkably noticeable in the moderns with their arrogance and vainglory in deciding their problems, which become ever more complicated for want of the display of a grateful spirit.

With this short account of the Mantras mostly dealing with the prowess of Agni in the Nitya Yajña, we come next to some of the most remarkable forms of the Yajñas of the Kāmya (voluntary) type, in which the fullest exhibition of the Yajamāna's wealth, pomp and power was made. These are the Soma Yajña, the Sautrāmaṇi Yajña and the Aśvamedha Yajña.

We take up the Soma Yajña first. We have already given in Chapter I, as warranted by the plan of the book, the significance of some of the Mantras connected with the Soma Yajña worship in the context of the help they render to the Yajamāna in enriching his personality for obtaining the vital good that belongs to the whole of life, and so we do not repeat their import. The Soma Yajña, however, calls for further treatment in the light of the interpretation of Soma connected with it. Soma is said to be a plant available on the Muñja mountain and on the Kailāsa summit of the Himalayas, where, it is said, there are plants which shine by night in darkness. The Soma plant is possibly one of them. It dries up after the monsoon and its leaves are collected and brought to the Soma Yajña precincts. They are kept soaked in water and then squeezed. The juice thus obtained is the Soma Rasa. It is a highly invigorating beverage, perhaps an elixir of life of high medicinal value. Indra is said to be fonder of it than any other divinity. The overdose indeed intoxicates, but the highest warlike feats of Indra (S'atakratu) in connection with the conquest of the demons and the demolition of their hundred cities are said to have been done under the inspiration of the Soma Rasa. The Soma is also the Haoma of the Parsis and, in that way, the Soma worship was prevalent even among them. It is, therefore, presumed that the Āryans in the extreme north had already set up the worship before they segregated themselves and before some of them settled down in Iran as the Pārasikas (Parsis).

The Ṛgveda pays Soma a homage as a deity that only Agni and Indra can compete. The Soma Yajña is the most ancient and significant worship. There are various legends connected with Soma. A Vedic one is that Soma was first in the possession of a Gandharva. The gods aspired to its possession. They, therefore, besought mother Gāyatrī to dispossess him of it and make it available to them, in order that they might be immortal with the precious drink to be the better of the demons. The great Mother, the legend says, assumed the figure of a falcon and did the feat. Soma is again said to be the offspring of Parjanya (god of rain), lying in waters, according to a Purāṇik legend, which mentions Viṣṇu as taking on the female form of fascinating Mohinī to rob the demons (Asuras) of the juice of immortality (Amṛta) which had been obtained by them from the churning of the ocean. This was said to be done to oblige the gods (Devas), who should be immortal, if they contemplated decisive victory over the demons. There is thus the likelihood of Soma conceived as Amṛta. Soma is also eulogized as omniscient and as an immortal tie between the mortal and the immortal. It is then perhaps the same as Candramā, the king of vegetation. It is also praised as the keeper of the cosmic law (Ṛta), upholding the three worlds and helping man to obtain the path of illumination (Devayāna) with its spiritual guidance. Again, as Savitā inspires, Soma is also said to heighten intellectual powers. Such is the Vedic greatness of Soma. Anyway, the Soma plant, with its inspiring and healing prowess, was most availed of by the Brāhmaṇas and even by the Kṣatriyas, and is conceived by the Ṛgveda as the representative of celestial Soma on earth to be the first to be worshipped in the Soma Yajña.

We now come to the celebration of the ceremony of that magnificent Yajña. The Soma Yajña was celebrated with great pomp by the nobly born Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas. A beautiful pavilion was erected on the outskirts of their town and a Yajñaśālā was prepared. Sixteen priests recited the holy Mantras and performed the ceremony at the sacrificial altar, which was a marvel of architecture. The most prominent object of offering was Soma. Lord Viṣṇu was conceived to be the king Soma and Agni, His attendant. Vedic Mantras in the Gāyatrī metre were predominantly recited. Four days were allotted to sundry worship and preparations, while the Soma Yajña ceremony, in its truest propriety, was performed on the fifth day. The Soma juice was obtained after a reverential squeezing from the wetted Somavalli leaves. The three Savanas constituting the celebrated worship viz. the Prātaḥsavana (morning adoration), the Mādhyandinasavana (noon adoration) and the Sāyaṁsavana (evening adoration) are connected with it. Food, milk, clarified butter and beasts formed the objects of offering (Havi) in this Yajña. The fire-generating pieces of wood, the upper one and the lower one, were imagined as the king Purūravā and the queen Urvaśī respectively and the fire generated by them was known as life (Āyuḥ). This was the Upasad Agni. The sixteen priests, functioning at the ceremony, were called Adhvaryu, Pratisṭhātā, Hotā, Brahmā, Agnīta, Maitrāvaruṇa, Brāhmaṇācchaṁsi, Ācchāvāk, Udgātā, Pratihártā, Prastotā, Neṣṭā, Netā, Potā, Subrahmaṇīya and Grāvastuta. Musical recitations of the Sāmaveda were predominant at the worship.

When the Yajamāna was initiated for the ceremony, he came under the rule that he should not tell a lie, that he should not display anger, that he should not speak in loud tones and that he should not take food. He had to subsist only on milk and on the remnants of the objects offered in the worship. The first day was the day of initiation for him and he offered an Iṣṭiyāga on the second to mark the commencement of the Soma Yajña proposed to be performed. Gold was the coin that was used. Somavalli (Soma plant) was purchased from the mountaineers, sitting outside the Yajñaśālā, in exchange for a heifer, and Soma was taken out in a procession and brought to the Yajñaśālā for being squeezed with a grand ceremony. Viṣṇu, Agni and Soma were the chief deities worshipped. The two Aśvinas were offered a mixture of hot ghee, cow-milk and the milk of a she-goat. A bread prepared from the flour of rice or barley (Puroḍāśa) was offered, the function being called Pravargya and conceived to be instrumental in the Yajamāna's obtaining a better birth.

Posts of wood, mostly of the Palāśa and the Bilva kinds, were set up for tying beasts, that were set free after a ceremony. After the purification ceremony of the space-directions and the the kindling of Agni in varied names on the third day, the installation of the Āhavanīya Agni was done on the fourth day. Soma and Agni were then placed with utmost reverence on the chief altar for worship.

The Agniṣṭoma and the Jyotiṣṭoma worships were performed. And, on the fifth day, the Soma Yajña commenced in right earnest. The Upāṁśusavana stone helped to the crushing of the dry Soma leaves with the Nigrābhya water, the squeezing done being known as Abhisava. The Soma Rasa was thus prepared. The squeezing of the Soma Rasa suggests an imaginative picture of a high spiritual significance for mortals as the Yajurveda gives it. The Rasa itself stands for immortality and the refused mass, left after squeezing, stands for death. Just as the immortal Soma Rasa forsakes the refuse, immortal life, which is the purest essence, is said to abandon the gross body. The immortality of the Jīvātmā is conceived to be consisting in that essence. Just as milk is separated for use from the mixture of milk and water by the swan, Prāṇa, which is that essence of the human body, is described to be continuing as conscient in omniscient life. Sūrya in the heavens, again, is mentioned as knowing His immortality in His formless, omniscient radiance, while His material body of form perishes. And, in that manner, as the Soma Rasa disentangles itself from the squeezed out Soma leaves, the first-born Prajāpati or the Virāṭ Puruṣa is represented as distinguishing His immortal consciousness as Brahma (knowledge) and Kṣatra (power) from His perishable body. Considering in this way, the seer says that the Soma Rasa stands for eternal Truth (Satya), while the refused mass of the Soma leaves stands for untruth (Anṛta). And the spiritual code of the Almighty manifesting the discrimination, says the Yajurveda, is that faith (S'raddhā) in the immortal life of Ātmā is wedded to truth and that want of that faith is wedded to falsehood, change and death. Immortal Prāṇa and Prajñā (consciousness) are thus, as we can judge in the light of this Vedic representation, latent in all matter; and, while the body appearing as a form, like the wave of a sea, is subject to change which is death, co-ordinated Prāṇa and Prajñā continue as immortal.[2] The progress of these co-ordinated Praṇā (life) and Prajñā (consciousness) is marked out more and more clearly as the form that manifests them is more and more refined as that of a Pitṛ or a Gandharva or a god. This is the Vedic law of organic life philosophically reviewed in connection with the Soma Rasa. And we come back to the Soma Yajña ceremony.

The three Savanas, the Prātaḥsavana, the Mādhyandinasavana and the Sāyaṁsavana, were undertaken with the offering of this victorious Soma Rasa and the chanting of Sāma hymns. This constituted the Agniṣṭomīya Soma Yajña, but there were other varieties of the Soma Yajña also, among which the Atirātra Gavāmayana is the most prominent, lasting, as it did, for ten or twelve months. It puts us into the memory of the Āryans living in the north pole (Uttara Dhruva) where the year consists of ten months with a long night of about 150 days, and, as scholars judge, the

Atirātra Gavāmayana ceremony is possibly connected with the anxious anticipation of sun-rise in the north pole that is so characteristically constituted. A legend runs that the Devas (gods) had resorted to the day and the Asuras (demons), to the night. The Asuras should anyhow be driven away from their place of refuge, and this may be the idea behind the worship. 'Gavāmayana' literally means the bringing back of the cows (Gāvaḥ), and Indra is supposed to have freed them from a demon as another legend would have it. But the 'Gāvaḥ' truly stand for the Ādityas as S'rī Rawal points out with the authority of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa; therefore, the 'Gāvaḥ' are, to speak more realistically, not ordinary cows, but light represented figuratively. The Atirātra Yajña is said to have been undertaken also as an aid to Indra in his effort to annihilate the demon Vṛtra, the principle of evil, resorting to darkness. We see in these legends, therefore, an attempt to establish the truth that Indra, the light-principle, asserts himself over Vṛtra, the principle of darkness; for the darkness of the night of ignorance with its evil agency must surely make room for the bright sunshine of the day of knowledge through its hierophants in all sincere pursuits to understand life in its true essence. The victory of the Devas, under Indra, over the Asuras is thus metaphorically represented as the victory of good over evil. The Gavāmayana Yajña is thus significant with its restoration of light.[3]

The Sautrāmaṇi Yajña is yet another type of the Kāmya (voluntary) Yajña with which the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas, wanting to play a major role in their life-stations, offered worship. The divine Aśvinas are represented by the Yājurveda as physicians to Indra and the goddess Sarasvatī as his instructress in spiritual lore. They help Indra to obtain physical and spiritual majesty in conformity with his great status as the foremost of the gods. Indra's immortal stature is decided by his majestic actions; and, for assuring such heroic actions, the Aśvinas and Sarasvatī are said to perfect his outer and inner form. For only with that all-round perfection, can Indra hope to function as Sutrāmā (the great protector) and to manifest truth (Satya) from his heart, as Savitā manifests immortal life from his body of energy. Satya is spoken of as Indra's ever-existential entity (Sat) and is described to be his immortal eye (Cakṣuḥ amṛtam). Thus the path of Indra's Prāṇa is rendered immortal. His body is perfected by the Āśvinas for his soul to operate from and his soul is perfected by Sarasvatī to utilise that body for appropriate actions. Immortal light is then added on to them for the operations of cosmic life. That light is referred to as the Sauṭrāmaṇi light.

Who would not think then that this Indra is, philosophically speaking, none else but the Prāṇa of man, eternally wedded to Prajñā (consciousness), and that it (Prāṇa) is a unity with the immortal cosmic Prāṇa, if it knows its evolved stature ? We are also led to judge that the divine physicians (Aśvinas) stand for the perfection of the body-principle and the divine Sarasvatī, for the perfection of the mind-principle. The truth then that Indra is indeed a perfected Prāṇa, when both his body and mind are perfected, emerges naturally. The Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad represents Indra as such Prāṇa. And wonderful is the significance of the 94th Mantra of the S'.Y.S. A. 19, when it instructs that Sarasvatī holds Indra as an embryo and Varuṇa, the lord of waters, slowly brings him out as the glory of the essence of the water (Rasa) and as the glory of the essence of spiritual knowledge (Sāma). Varuṇa, it should be remembered, is the representative of the highest ethical principle of the Ṛgveda and a significant name of Paramātmā in its connotation of "one fit to be chosen and courted." The goddess Sarasvatī is celebrated in the Yajurveda as the embodiment of omniscience in cosmic life (Maho arṇaḥ Sarasvatī pracetayati ketunā dhiyo viśvā virājati). Indra can thus be conceived as an individual life-principle functioning in that cosmic life. And we can construe from this highly figurative representation that Varuṇa, standing for Paramātmā, holds Indra, standing for an individual soul, in Sarasvatī, standing for omniscient cosmic life. Let us reflect at this stage over the machinery of Paramātmā through which the functioning of an individual soul is rendered possible in the universe. That surest machinery is first the essence of water (Rasa) as life. Life is surely the essence of water (Āpomayaḥ prāṇaḥ) so far as a sentient, breathing body is concerned, but, for that life to evolve, a disillusioning, satisfying spiritual knowledge (Sāma) is necessary before it can recognise its eternal status as Ātmā upheld in Ṛta (Truth). Indra or the Jīvātmā can thus be brought out as the glory of the essence of water (Rasa) and of spiritual knowledge (Sāma) by Varuṇa or Paramātmā from the womb of Sarasvatī, the omniscient cosmic life, to be delivered to endless Ṛta (Truth).

Let us also have a fuller grasp of the personality of Indra from the Mantras of the S′.Y.S. A. 20 which are dedicated to his praise. Indra is represented there as a fearsome hero, who would overcome the enemy without any loss of time. Hymns of praise are sung in his honour to commemorate his ancient acts of martial glory which sustain Kṣatra (heroism) on earth. He is said to be ever increasing in his power which is besought by man to protect himself. He is described as irresistible and fulfilling man's cherished desires. He has adamantine hands to protect man and he is a successful destroyer of the evil-minded that are bent on destroying the good. He is supposed to descend from his celestial home, seated on an emerald horse, on earth for rendering protection to his adorer and for nourishing and enriching him. He is, therefore, a very welcome guest at his sacrifices. He is described as an all-knowing (Viśvavedāh) guard on human destiny and as one possessed of supreme affluence (Svavān). He can assure complete fearlessness ; he can ward off the evil to come. The sacrificer, therefore, craves for his grace and good will. He has earned the great names of S′akra, S′atakratu, Purandara, Vṛtrahan and Vajrabāhu to denote the significance of his marvellous valour in taming the demons and in destroying their strongholds.

Great sages of the Vasiṣṭha family recite Mantras in his honour. Dawns and nights (Uṣāsānaktam) are said to join hands with Sarasvatī in equipping him with power in a sustained endeavour to overcome evil. The goddesses Sarasvatī, Bhāratī and Īḍā, the representatives of the heavens, the space and the earth respectively, have squeezed the essence of Soma to supply him an inspiring and invigorating drink. The Aśvinas and Sarasvatī have skilfully obtained from the demon Namuci the rare treasure of wealth and food for Īndra to be irresistible in strength. Armed with this rare might, he vanquishes the notorious Namuci, severs his head from his body with the froth of water and causes rain to fall on earth for plentiful food to grow. The gods Savitā and Varuṇa add to that martial strength of Indra. He is, therefore, the fitter to kill the demon Vṛtra who has been multiplying his acts of devastation. Such glorious Indra is supplicated to bestow a part of that strength on the Yajamāna to make him glorious in his wake. This is the essence of the Sautrāmaṇi Yajña Mantras which are recited to offer a special worship to Indra in honour of his great name Maghavan that signifies greatness of a surpassing nature. But the warrior Indra of dazzling lustre (Citrabhānu) is yet a paragon of learning to be loved by the learned (Viprajūtaḥ). Vedic hymns go out to eulogize him as highly resourceful in all ways and vast as the sea (Samudravyacasam), and the two great Mantras 45 and 46 in the S'.Y.S. A. 8 rise to the highest strain of worship which identifies Indra with Viśvakarmā (Creator), when they invoke his aid for protection. He is spoken of as the Lord of creation and of speech (Vācaspatim), possessed of the speed of mind and responding to the calls of the adorers as the good and active principle of the universe (Viśvaśambhū and Sādhukarmā). He is thus described as an imperishable guardian of this evolving universe deserving a ready obeisance from even the most ancient sages.

Indra is even thought of as capable of holding the three worlds within him. He is the divine ruler (Divyaṁ śāsam) chastising those that swerve from the path of duty (Viśvāsāham). He is the most adored leader of the gods (Marutvantam), matchless in frame, and yet he is humane enough to be at the beck and call of man to sympathise with him and shower on him his boons. The worshipper feels convinced that none else achieves for him that happiness which Indra does; he prays, therefore, that the Vedic lyrics, addressed to Indra's greatness, environ him from all directions, in order that he (Indra) may enjoy them with his human touch. This is the esteem which the Indra of the Sautrāmaṇi Yajña worship enjoys in the Yajurveda.

We have but one more Yajña of the variety of desire (Kāmya) to treat now in this chapter. That is the famous Aśvamedha Yajña, about which Mantras are given in the S'.Y.S. A. 22, 23, 24 and 25.

The worship of the Aśvamedha Yajña commences on the seventh day of the bright half of the Hindu month of Phālguna. Gold is consecrated to this worship. The Yajña is adored as the essence of Agni, and it is described as light and nectar preserving the life of the Yajamāna. Many heroic ancient kings of Āryāvarta performed this type of sacrifice. The Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, the two great epics of Bhārata, relate the stories of such kings. The Aśva (horse) is conceived to be an embodiment of the Lord of the universe (Prajāpati) and, as such, immortal. The Aśva again is an embodiment of strength and connotes pervasion of the universe ("Aś" means "to pervade"). The Aśva's blessed movement is said to know no respite (Atya). None certainly can kill such a horse (Aśva) in the truest sense; yet it is supposed to be killed in the sacrifice. Oblations are offered to Agni, Soma, Ap, Savitā, Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Indra, Bṛhaspati, Mitra and Varuṇa with the mystic word Svāhā in this Yajña. The activities of the Aśva are remembered and offerings are given in honour of them.

The universal inspirer, Lord Savitā of the golden rays, is first remembered in this Yajña to refine the intellect (Buddhi) of the Yajamāna with His noble, purifying light (Vareṇya bharga); for the Vedic idea is that the refulgent Savitā, omniscient and the final resort of the spiritually evolved, assures man, with His grace, the undecaying knowledge of truth. He is considered to be the greatest dispenser of the right attitudes of mind for man with His knowledge of the mind of man (Mativid). He is also eulogized as the keeper of the eternal law (Satpati). The Yajamāna, therefore, propitiates that Savitā and seeks His friendship first, in order that his propitiation of the pantheon of the gods may be complete, and in the fullest hope that the Lord confers on him a rare spiritual emanation of the fullest divinity (Viśvadevya). It is also thought that the Adhvaryu priest would, with such worship first, be able to kindle, in the Aśvamedha Yajña, immortal Agni who is competent to carry satisfaction to all the divinities with oblations as their intelligent messenger (Uśigdūta) on earth. Then would Agni present the gods on the sanctified altar as the leader of the glorious train. Then, it is said, would the ceremony be blessed by Prajāpati as the witness of man's mind, and the Yajamāna would be sanctified by the revered mother Aditi of philanthropic disposition and by the mighty mother Sarasvatī breathing purification. The Yajamāna's sanctification being thus complete, Lord Viṣṇu, residing in all creatures as their innermost life (Śipiviṣṭaḥ), is invoked to bless the Aśvamedha Yajña.

One of the most celebrated of Vedic invocations is, at this stage, recorded by the 22nd Mantra of the S'.Y.S. A. 22. It is worthy of literal translation, which runs as follows: "Oh Brahman, may such Brāhmaṇas be born in our country as know the illuminating spiritual lore (Brahmavarcasī)! May such Kṣatriyas be born as are heroic warriors, competent to pierce their arrows deeply in the vitals of the enemy! May our cows give plentiful milk and oxen be strong enough to bear the hardest yoke! May our horses be swift! May our women be accomplished! May our men ride chariots only to be victorious! May the Yajamāna have a youthful son proficient in conferring with the intelligent in learned assemblies! May we get desired rains! May our trees yield fine fruit! May our countrymen be hale and hearty!."

And in view of these noble ends, the priests made oblations in the Aśvamedha Yajña to the Prāṇas and the Indriyas (breaths and senses); to the three worlds and the constellations and the space-directions; to the waters, the winds, the mists, the rains and the lighting; to the days and the nights, to the months and the year (Saṁvatsara), to the seasons and their products; to the Sun and the moon and their rays; to the Vasus and the Rudras and the Ādityas and the Viśvedevas; to the plants and the trees and their roots, branches, flowers and fruits. They offered oblations with their mystic Svāhā to life in general and to the residence-giving, all-pervading prosperous Essence. They offered oblations to food in general and to the food consecrated to the Yajña; to the food of the celestial world and to its master the Sun; to the pervading food and the food of the universe. And lastly they offered oblations in praise of the one universal Lord (Prajāpati), to the eternal pair of Puruṣa and Prakṛti and to the infinite forms with which the whole creation is teeming.

The Aśvamedha Yajña is fundamentally the worship of Prajāpati. We must know, therefore, what is the Vedic conception of Prajāpati. Prajāpati is the same as Hiraṇyagarbha, the first of the created beings, their lord and guardian. He upholds the cosmic worlds. Sūrya is His power-emanation and the days of the Saṁvatsara reveal that power as the air (Vāyu) and the space and the heavens do. Prajāpati rules the cosmic life and rules.

as such, the bipeds and the quadrupeds. And the moon again is His power-emanation manifested in nights. The earth, the fire and the constellations also manifest Prajāpati's power. The learned, therefore, meditate on the friendly Āditya-Aśva, the all-pervading, solar power-emanation of Prajāpati, who moves all round watching all creation and filling the heavens with light. He is said to be as swift as the wind and one with the constitution of water and Indra. The eight Vasus entertain Him with the music of Gāyatrī and the eleven Rudras, with that of Jagatī. The prowess of this Āditya-Aśva stands out in superb conspicuity, for, it is said, He can take on a body at will and knows His own adoration and propitiation.

This Aśva, so conceived, is indeed deathless and ever on the divine way leading to the immortal abode of the noble and the enlightened. If an Aśva is an object of sacrifice in human conception, he is even such an object as Agni, Vāyu or Sūrya. For it is said that the gods offered Agni for sacrifice and, in that very act, conquered the earth. The gods offered Vāyu for sacrifice and, in that very act, conquered the space. And they offered Sūrya for sacrifice and conquered the heavens. The Aśva is, therefore, deathless, though sacrificed, as Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya are, and conquers the three worlds for the Yajamāna. Even Prajāpati, says the seer, offered His own sacrifice and brought the cosmos into existence, and the Aśva is even that Prajāpati who is the Lord of the created species and their dearest love and treasure. The music of the Vedic metres, Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubh, Jagatī, Anuṣṭup, Bṛhatī, Paṅkti, Uṣṇiḥ and Kakup is proposed to compose Him in mind as do the S'akvarī and Revatī hymns of the Ṛgveda, the space-directions, the rains and lightning.

The Aśvamedha Yajña Mantras lead to the interpretation of Brahman, of cosmic life and its origin in the celebrated Brahmodaya Saṁvāda. Brahman, it is said in that learned conversation, is like the light of Sūrya and has entered the five Prāṇas, the five senses and the five elements as Puruṣa — as their animating spirit. Brahman is represented as filling the entire creation. The heavens are mentioned in the Saṁvāda as the first of the regions to which the sanctified Aśva-bird of the Aśvamedha Yajña flies, while the gloom of night enshrouds the life-forms of this moist earth. And that night is said to be none else but the unborn Māyā. The altar of the sacrificial worship is conceived to be the end of the earth, and the worship itself is conceived to be the origin of creation. The Soma plant, representing vegetation, is mentioned to be the seed of the all-pervading Aśva and the holy word in the form of the Vedas is described to be the highest home of Brahman. Brahman, the blissful first principle (Subhūḥ prathamaḥ), existing in His own right (Svayambhūḥ), is said to have laid the seed in this fathomless ocean of Māyā (Mahati arṇave) and Prajāpati was the first to be born. It is indeed a learned discussion — this discussion between learned priests — reputed as Brahmodaya Saṁvāda.

The seer asks man to make an offering of love to this Prajāpati; for He is the same as the Yajña Puruṣa or the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Hiraṇyagarbha or Īśvara who assures him the eternal life of Ātmā in contradistinction to the phenomenal life, whose dispositions are ever changing like the evanascent hues in the western sky at an autumnal sunset. The availing of that eternal life constitutes the real strength of man in the opinion of the Yajurveda and Prajāpati gives the strength. As all the gods obey His word of command as law, to seek out His refuge is glorified as emancipation from change and death; and not to do so is believed to be courting grief and death. He is said to refine human understanding with grace and nourish the intelligent modes of the human mind. Nothing avails, says a Vedic prayer; the Lord reveals His glory before him only whom He chooses (Yaṁ tu eṣaḥ vṛṇīte taṁ vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām). And Prajāpati chooses only the truthful and the holy. The wheels of His Brahmacakra of life would not crush a righteous person, as His love is secured. A truthful person's vision and audition are fraught with good, as he is the receptacle of Prajāpati's love. With His love only, the father and the son, men born and to be born, nay the three worlds are said to play the role of the mother Aditi of everlasting prosperity. It is, therefore, instructed that, if the life born of the sun appears to end, as the Aśva in the Aśvamedha Yajña, Prajāpati only operates there and all wailing should end; for, life never dies like that Aśva. It only evolves from station to station towards divine life with the love of Prajāpati.

Power, prosperity and paradise are mentioned to be the fruit of the Yajamāna with his celebration of the Aśvamedha Yajña as such, but the peace and joy of the heart, it should be averred, is his highest fruit of the series with his understanding of the Yajña in its philosophical aspect. We too have to face life as it comes and want more and more peace day by day as a law of necessity in our evolutionary round. Let us, therefore, pray that the Agni of watchfulness ever burn at the shrines of our hearts to guard against our lapses in evil (Antama trātā śivo bhava) and assure us and our fellows rich mental composure (Sumnāya nūnamīmahe sakhibhyaḥ); for that is also the last prayer of the Yajamāna of the Aśvamedha Yajña. And, when the vast human mass of Asia and Africa have not even one square meal served to them during the day, the prosperous may pray that the rich (Adīnā), divine mother Aditi shed their poverty of thought that comes in the way of maintaining economic equilibrium in the world-society. There is the appropriate sacrifice of the little heart (Hṛdaya) to be undertaken by the wealthy in all fairness for its merging in the magnanimous heart of humanity, and that sacrifice would surely outbalance the sacrifice of a little horse (Aśva), undertaken in the time of yore. For, Prajāpati is humanity and all creatures fundamentally, as we shall see in the highest conception of the sacrificial horse (Aśvasya medhyasya) in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad.

What is that conception of "Aśva" in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad ? The dawn (Uṣā) is represented there as that Aśva's head. The sun is His eye, the wind is His breath; and the Vaiśvānara Agni is His open mouth. The year (Saṁvatsara) is His body. The heavens, the space and the earth constitute the Aśva's back, belly and hoofs respectively. The directions and the intermediate directions are His respective sides. The seasons are His limbs; months and fortnights are His joints; days and nights are His feet. The constellations are said to be His bones and the sky, His flesh. The rivers are His arteries and the mountains are His liver and spleen. Vegetation is His hair. The rising sun is His front part and the setting sun is His back part. Lightning is His yawning and thunder is His body-shaking. Rain is His urine and articulation is His speech. The day and night are mentioned as His power. The sea is His birth-place. He carries the gods under the name of Vājin, the

Asuras under the name of Arvan, and men under the name of Aśva. This growing organism of the universe of the modern philosophical thought of Prof. Whitehead is the Prajāpati — the Aśva — of the ancient Āryan seers according to this magnanimous conception of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad.[4] The Aśva functioning with all His different limbs is only one — a unity. So, as the limbs of the body stand in a living, intimate co-operation for the functioning of a living body, all created forms, animate and inanimate, should function harmoniously for upholding the cosmic life of Prajāpati, as man could judge as long as there is the correct idea of life in him. All devastations and massacres are ruled out in this thought. And yet Prajāpati transcends cosmic life as Brahman. That transcendence is shrouded in mystery. It may be that a person of a pure mind like the Buddha, Jesus Christ or Mahātmā Gandhi, who has lost the sense of hurting and killing another, may know the transcendence and make it his own; for life-struggle in its murderous aspect is transcended by him with the knowledge of one full soul (Ātmā).

Dogmas injure the building of a federated world, but this highest understanding of the Aśva, given by the Upaniṣad, can help build it; and perhaps nothing else can as this supreme idea of creation as one person in the Yajurveda. And, if we think over it, it gives us moral strength to appreciate with love the difference and duality in the phenomena of our Lord's creation as in the living limbs of the Aśva. The best in the idealist science to-day proclaims unity in the multiplicity of these phenomena, as the best in philosophy does, in one transcendence of the silly antagonism that is believed to separate them. And that unity can be preserved, only if we act in life with a sense of sacrifice taught by the Yajurveda. "The fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength to-day. The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation every-where", says the great Prof. Albert Einstein. He adds," I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hands of most devoted workers in the cause. The example of great and pure characters is the only thing that can produce fine ideas or noble deeds. Money only appeals to selfishness and always tempts its owners irresistibly to abuse it."[5] And in complete consonance with this great thought of the day, the great S'rī Jawaharlal Nehru held that modes of thought should be changed as well as the environments, because they are complementary; and conflict, he thought, emerges from man's inability to appreciate another's view-point, and that the practical but ethical mind, in preference to political and economic power, can best count for the real service of humanity.[6] The Aśva of the Aśvamedha Yajña never dies, but takes on a richer and fuller life by merging in the Eternal Life; even so, all giving and leaving is "taking" a million times over again, and only such "nobleness enkindleth nobleness" to invite the millennium on this sordid earth.

CHAPTER VII

The Puruṣamedha and the Sarvamedha Yajñas

IN A grand prescription of that renunciation which the ethical conscience devises for individual and social regeneration, self-immolation is the word. The Yajamāna possessed of such a sense gives rather than receives. He wants to say only one blessed word of advice to the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas, the S'ūdras, friends, relations and strangers. That word is "give in charity". He wants to encompass his rise thereby on earth and in heaven. He invokes Bṛhaspati, born of Truth, to give him the wealth of the spirit, so that his giving of material wealth in sacrifice may be complete. He would be strong militarily and politically like Indra, but his entreaty to Bṛhaspati for securing him the spiritual wealth of the mind to facilitate his "giving" is fundamental. With this sense of giving and sacrificing, he approaches the ever wakeful Vaiśvānara Agni, the Lord of creation, and starts sharing food with others so as to satisfy His representative in a mortal frame, the Vaiśvānara Agni that digests food.

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad illustrates this sharing of food with others. It exemplifies the carrying of satisfaction to the Vaiśvānara Agni in a person that upholds life (Prāṇa) by digesting food and helps in the intelligent play of the omniscient cosmic Vaiśvānara Agni, whom it represents in a mortal frame. It explains, while it illustrates the matter, that, as the cosmic Vāyu (air) is the ultimate principle (Saṁvarga) of Agni, Sūrya, Candra and Ap (water) — the cosmic Four —, the Prāṇa (breath) that stands for the life of a person is the ultimate principle (Saṁvarga) of his speech, vision, audition and mind — the individual Four. The Upaniṣad says that the Prāṇa, the very life in an individual, can continue only with food and insists, therefore, on the universal sharing of food. It illustrates the need with a fine example. Once S'aunaka of the Kapi family and Abhipratārī of the Kakṣasena family were being served with food. A Brahmacārī (religious mendicant) came to their door then and begged for food, but they did not give. So the Brahmacārī asked them if they knew who is the deity who swallows the Four as the guardian of the world. The deity, said the Brahmacārī, surely lives in every individual and charged S'aunaka and Abhipratārī with having refused food to that deity to whom it rightly belongs.

When S'aunaka realised that he had refused food to that intelligent and powerful deity, Prāṇa, who consumes food in all mortal frames, he instantaneously ordered food, that rightly belongs to Prāṇa, to be given to the Brahmacārī. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad thus glorifies the giving of food to the Vaiśvānara Agni to sustain the Prāṇa of a person in its scheme of the propitiation of the intelligent cosmic Life known as the universal Vaiśvānara Agni.[1]

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad merely points to the way an initial step could be taken to grow gradually into a method for the annihilation of selfishness in man and the cultivation of the sense of renunciation which connotes broad sympathy with all life in a progressive obliteration of the sense of personal security. This worship belongs to those blessed persons that want to forgo sensuous gratifications and personal gains; for only then life in general can be assisted. And this brings us to the great Vedic Virāṭ Yajña undertaken by the Virāt Puruṣa or Prajāpati by his physical self-extinction and treated in the Puruṣamedha Yajña Adhyāya of the S'. Y. Saṁhitā. It is the climax of sacrifice reached, in order that the universe, elemental and phenomenal, may start functioning, and that life, high and low, may flourish, leaving Prajāpati free to enter it all as invisible Life and transcend it. Prajāpati becomes the omniscient Agni only with that sacrifice of self-extinction and breathes purifying animation in the mundane world. He can, only with that sacrifice, permeate the five Prāṇas, the ten Indriyas (senses) and Mana (mind), assuring happiness to the evolving humanity as Mahāprāṇa (Bṛhatsāma). He can, only with that Yajña, flow as Soma, nourishing phenomenal life and raising the evolved man to higher spheres of thought where "giving" is the governing code of life (Siṣāsantaḥ). Prajāpati operates in this manner in inspiring man to utilise his resources for the welfare of others. This nobler Indra of the omniscient Cosmic Life, Prajāpati, overflowing with the nourishing elixir of Soma, thus floods the domains of the humbler Indra of the phenomenal life, man, and works the miracle of intoxicating him for fruitful service.

Years, split into seasonal periods, enrich life's activities in phenomenal spheres, while the truth-bearing instructions of the sages (Ṛṣayas) enrich man's spirit. This is the great Agni-law. This is the prospect of Prajāpati. Both the affairs should run in smooth harmony, for we can never override Nature. We have to learn to let others share her wholesome products with us. This is the Brāhmaṇa's sense of worship that satisfies the law and its extension is desired among the Kṣatriyas. Power may lead the heroic astray in the ways of self-aggrandisement, destruction and sin, in their stupor of ignorance. Hence the Vedic ordaining of the Brahma worship for the Kṣatriyas, which would put them on the right track to defeat evil. The heroic world (Kṣatra) would be the nobler with this ideal of renunciation (Brahma). Thus humanity's greatest danger of annihilation would be warded off and nothing but good would result. This must happen according to the Agni-law and the seer of the Yajurveda prays for it. He also prays that man be permitted to know his duties fully in the progressive course of instruction (Saṁśitam cit santarām saṁśiśādhi) leading to renunciation and thus culminating into an eye-opener of divine life which fulfils his highest destiny (Vardhaya enaṁ mahate saubhagāya). Notwithstanding the prayer of the seer that medical science may flourish to the extent where death is done with (Pratyauhatām Aśvinā mṛtyum asmāt bhiṣajā śacibhiḥ) and that the terror of Yamaloka no longer holds, it is easily understood that such an achievement could only be relative and that the attainment of eternal life is the goal for man that the seer has in view. It is evident in the seer's further prayer that man attain the perennially blessed life beyond darkness

(Tamasaspari) from which there is no return to symbolic values. He sees that this must come true and that man must be truly free. But this permanent freedom of man is envisaged only with a sacrifice in which he gives his all as a token of his spirit of renunciation. Such a sacrifice is the Puruṣamedha Yajña, which we now take up as our subject.

The Puruṣamedha Yajña begins on the tenth day of the bright half of the Hindu month of Caitra and ends in forty days. The initiation lasts for twenty-three days. Persons of different categories, high and low, assemble at the place of worship. The Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas are conspicuously seen. There are the thief and the eunuch and the libertine. There are the actor, the carpenter and the blacksmith. The madman and the gambler are there as well as the crooked and the stunted. The blind man is there; the deaf man is there; the bald-headed man is there. There are the wood-cutter and the washerman. There are the keepers of the elephant, of the horse, of the goat and of the cow. There are the servant and the sweet-speaker as well as the Yogī and the disciplined recluse. There are the youthful woman and the white-haired dame. The fisherman, the Bhil, the assassin, the diseased man, the leper, the garrulous man, the lute-player, the astrologer — they are all there. There are the long and the short, the strong and the weak, the white and the black, the hairy and the hairless. They are all there to witness the Puruṣamedha worship.

Indeed, it cannot be that all these persons were assembled in the Yajña to be sacrificed as some hold; that would not be rational thinking. The possibility rather is that they all took part in this Puruṣamedha Yajña to enjoy the worship. Although it is true that beasts were sacrificed in some Yajñas as the Soma Yajña, the sacrifice of human beings in the Puruṣamedha Yajña is ruled out by some of the best thinkers. One great plea on which this human sacrifice can be thought to be impossible is the fact of spiritual, philosophical and ethical vision, so decisively noticeable in the sense of the Vedic Mantras that are beyond the possibility of later interpolation. Those seers that can think of the Devayāna and the Nāka and the immateriality and universality of Ātmā cannot indeed think of such inhuman forms of sacrifice. The Āryans were non-vegetarians as they primarily belonged to very cold climates. The geographical conditions may have forced upon them the use of meat and wine, as we see many civilised races, in like conditions, availing of them; but their spiritual aspirations and sense of human values would certainly not permit us to think of the degraded mode of the human sacrifice which, some think, was given in the Puruṣamedha Yajña. There appears to be an atmosphere of refined worship in their Yajñas, which appear to be undertaken more for the solidarity of their groups and society; it cannot, therefore, be even remotely guessed that they thought of human sacrifice. Even if we argue that some ancient nations permitted human sacrifices and that the Āryans also, therefore, did so, it cannot be so inferred, if we face the facts of their high aspirations to be perennially merged in the infinite Ātmā whose divine personifications, indeed, are all these Agni and Indra and Varuṇa and Āditya. The Vedic religion does not stop at the achievement of heaven by man, but at the merger of the individual Jīvātmā with the all-pervading Existence, Mind and Joy of Brahman as Saccidānanda. This ambition demands that the Vedic worship should breathe more of that discipline and rectitude and resignation that put a check on cruel gratifications and extend broad sympathy to humanity at large.

If a sinner, of his own accord, sacrificed himself, as we hear of him doing at the Tuṣānala and Mahāprasthāna ceremonies, he did so for the expiation of his sins.[2] Despite the fact that these rites show the rule of the jungle, there is the obvious motive of self-immolation of the person to be rinsed of the evil of the flesh which, he thinks, has led him astray. This is then, in some way, intelligible. We have heard of the people in the Purāṇas ready to sever their heads from their bodies in the course of the Kamala Pūjā undertaken to propitiate Lord S'aṅkara. That is a matter of personal choice, though unjustifiable socially. But surely, barring secret human sacrifices offered to angry gods and goddesses, so non-Āryan in character, by a few misguided religious sects, a public worship in which human sacrifice can be in vogue in the ancient Bhārata is unthinkable. Still however, if it is deemed conceivable in view of the practices of some ancient nations in other countries, it is contended by scholars that it could not be so, because none was ready to kill

S'unaḥśepa, the son of Ajīgarta, at the Puruṣamedha Yajña. On the contrary, the great Ṛṣi Viśvāmitra made S'unaḥśepa his spiritual disciple.[3] The Ṛgveda clearly relates the episode. The Puruṣamedha Yajña, therefore, can, at best, be understood as a sacrifice symbolising the highest sense of renunciation and self-extinction, where the sense of rendering homage to the gods for personal prosperity has been subdued into one of abnegation. Jesus Christ laid down his life to atone for the sins of the human race and to establish the principle of purity of love for his fellow-brethren and for their Father in the highest Heaven. He cared not for the dire consequences, but only invited them, when he preached his noble sermons of love for the poor and the down-trodden to the greedy and the unscrupulous, who would not only not listen to them, but would rather frantically wreak revenge on the noble preacher for endeavouring to establish humanity and equity and fraternal love, because these teachings ran counter to their cherished designs of self-aggrandisement. Great Jesus is, therefore, the truest of God's sons to the true Christians, deserving of worship from the "ransomed race". Unguarded Mahātmā Gandhi held himself out for certain assassination in that very manner, when he preached his gospel of love and fellow-feeling between nations, holding different creeds, in the teeth of opposition from a section that would not understand it. The Vedic Prajāpati or the Virāṭ Puruṣa performs a sacrifice symbolising only such a sacrifice as is mentioned in the Puruṣa Sūkta of the S'.Y. Saṁhitā. It brings the universe into being and exemplifies thereby the great principle of self-immolation which implies that others can live, only if one is ready to fade away in the act of encompassing that end. This Puruṣamedha Yajña, therefore, is deserving of our careful attention today in Bhārata, when we study the Sarvodaya programme of Bhūdāna, Grāmadāna, Sampattidāna and Jīvanadāna (the giving of land, villages, wealth and life-long service respectively) of Ācārya Vinobaji for bringing about economic and social equality among the people of Bhārata and for ushering in an era of genuine democracy in that way. If we should learn about this Yajña in an integrated manner, we must understand what the Puruṣa Sūkta of the S'ukla Yajurveda tells us first about what existed before the beginning of time with cosmic manifestation and next of the formation of the cosmos.

The Puruṣa Sūkta tells us that the whole cosmic creation is but one part of the Puruṣa, the Lord of immortality (Amṛtatvasya īśānaḥ), while His three parts are filled with an unknown and timeless, immortal Existence without change, in the hope of attaining which, Brahmacarya and Tapa and Satya are practised by sages. With these three parts of unimaginable, blissful Existence, the Puruṣa Sūkta says, the Supreme Puruṣa has transcended the one part, which is known as the Virāṭ or the Brahmāṇḍa (Cosmos) and where He has diversified Himself in infinite varieties of forms in various directions and has entered all that are sentient beings (Sāśana) and all that are insentient objects (Anaśana). The Puruṣa Sūkta conceives of the infinite extension of the immortal Essence as existing before the beginning of creation, defying all codes of time, space and measure.

The Sūkta then instructs us about the formation of the cosmos. It tell us that this cosmic creation (Virāṭ) manifests itself only as the power-emanation of the almighty Puruṣa and has a special Puruṣa to claim it as his body. This latter Puruṣa is recognised as the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati. The creation in the infinite forms that are and that were and that will be is, however, understood by the Puruṣa Sūkta as only the Highest Puruṣa, the Lord of immortality, who, in His wonderful transcendence, has far outstripped what is created and experienced by the senses and thought of by the mind of man. If the world of objects, therefore, exists as we experience it, it is said to constitute only the glory (Mahimā) of the Supreme Puruṣa, whose form there is none in His ancient transcendence of that world. The Puruṣa Sūkta, however, instructs that only He resides in that one part of His power-residence as infinite forms with infinite heads (Sahasraśīrṣā Puruṣaḥ) and infinite eyes (Sahasrākṣaḥ) and infinite feet (Sahasrapāt). As such only, we then must think, He is there as at once the object of experience, the experiencing Jīvātmā and the witness of the Jīvātmā's experience. Indeed, the Supreme Puruṣa is, in this way, this concrete earth, the Jīvas and their bodies and yet beyond them according to the instruction of the Yajurveda.

What distinguishes itself as creation different from Him from our point of view is attributed by the Sarvamedha Yajña chapter of the S'. Yajurveda to His joy of sport (Yaḥ ābabhūva bhuvanāni viśvā Prajāpatiḥ prajayā saṁrarāṇaḥ trīṇi jyotīṇṣi sacate) as it is attributed to His reflection (Tapasaḥ tan mahinā ajāyata ekam) by the Nāsadīya Sūkta of the Ṛgveda. It is the Lord's will, all the same, that He should be many, (Bahu syām) and it has so happened. That could be the firm Vedic view. If, however, a separate Virāt Puruṣa, claiming the Virāṭ body, is mentioned to manifest it with an act of sacrifice, it is something that will be presently dealt with. But we shall do it with the understanding that the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati is only the Supreme Puruṣa in the final analysis as the Virāṭ is, that the diversified creation stands as such only on account of the will of the Lord, and that the Puruṣamedha Yajña or the Yajña of Prajāpati stands as the symbol of the truth that many can exist only if a person ceases to feed fat on his egoistic modes and prepares to spread away his individuality into many. This Yajña, in other words, is only the quality of renunciation or self-sacrifice metaphorically represented and we approach it as such.

The gods, the Sādhyas and the Ṛṣis, it is said, commenced the rites of the Puruṣamedha Yajña. And what constituted the Ājya (clarified butter), the Havi (sacred offering) and the Idhma (fuel) of the Yajña ? The spring season (Vasanta) is mentioned as the Ājya, the autumn as the Havi and the summer as the Idhma. In that manner, the seven Vedic Chandas or the seven spheres of the universe or the five elements and mind and intellect are stated to have become the enclosure (Paridhi) of the Yajña. Also the five elements and their five subtle qualities (Tanmātrās), the five senses of knowledge and the five senses of action and mind are said to have become the sacrificial sticks (Samidh) of the Puruṣamedha Yajña. And thus the gods, the Sādhyas, and the Ṛṣis offered that glorious worship to the Supreme Being, the Puruṣa Sūkta says, with the consecration (Praukṣan) of this first-born Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati in their meditation as a mode of mental sacrifice (Barhiṣi praukṣan). They knew and want man to know, with such an equipment of the Yajña, that whatever manifests itself to the senses and can be thought of is not different from Brahman or Puruṣa (Puruṣaḥ eva idaṁ sarvam). They also want us to understand that the mental sacrifice is the best that man can undertake for a graded course of the refinement of his notions in the construction of the supreme conception that nothing is different from the Supreme Puruṣa in the objective universe. All that is gross is thus proposed to be got rid of in the ideal worship of the Lord as a pervading Power. For that way lies the appropriate worship responding to the noblest instruction that can be devised for man to lose his sense of enjoyment of possessions in phenomenal objects, and inspire him instead with the sense of giving away his possessions in the interest of others. In this ideal worship, the gross measures of the worshipper melt away and make room for his nobler and progressively rising philanthropic modes of dealing with God's creation, which let him obtain the ultimate objective of being convinced that God is all this creation and that "alien there is none". The agonising sense of difference and consequent exploitation would thus end. Not only would brotherhood be thus rendered possible between man and man, but between man and all other creatures. For have we not heard that wild beasts offer friendship to the Ṛṣis and sit near them to be affectionately patted? When this could happen, why cannot a friendly human federation be brought into being by availing of such a worship in the world, whereby nothing but peace reigns and all warring is banished?

But the condition for bringing this paradise on earth is that every householder (Prajāpati) must undergo the mental sacrifice that the first-born Prajāpati, the representative of humans, was subjected to by the Devas, the Sādhyas and the Ṛṣis, in order that man may be the instrument of the right modes of thoughts, and not of crude instincts and passions, in the interest of his evolution into the identity of Brahman or the Supreme Puruṣa. The purifying great ones, says the Puruṣa Sūkta, attained the highest status of life in the dominion of non-affliction (Nāka) with this practice in primeval times, and hold out a promise of that eternal bliss to the spiritually evolved race that treads the path of purifying self-sacrifice (Puruṣamedha Yajña) in a regenerated intellectual climate.

The account of the sacrifice of Prajāpati, as set forth by the Yajurveda, is vividly given by the Aitareya Upaniṣad.[4] It says that the Supreme Being (Ātmā) was there all alone before the creation began and that there was nothing else. He desired to create the worlds and the creation proceeded. Waters manifested themselves enveloping the heaven and the earth. Light was seen in the space. Death projected itself on the sphere of the earth. The Supreme Being then reflected that the guardians of the worlds should be created. He, therefore, extracted from the waters a Puruṣa. This was the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati and his shape was that of man. The Supreme Being then heated him. As an egg would, the mouth of the Virāṭ Puruṣa burst open and, from it, proceeded speech and, from speech, Agni proceeded. The heating having been continued, his nostrils burst wide open, giving rise to Prāṇa ; from this Prāṇa, proceeded Vāyu. His eyes burst, bringing out sight ; the sun (Āditya) proceeded from this sight. His ears burst out and, from them, came hearing ; and, from hearing, proceeded the quarters (Diśaḥ). His skin burst, giving rise to hair ; and, from the hair, proceeded the guardians of plants and vegetation (Auṣadhayaḥ). His heart burst and mind came out of it ; and, from the mind, the moon (Candramā) arose. His navel burst : from the navel, came the Apāna Prāṇa going downward and, from the Apāna Prāṇa, death (Mṛtyu) arose. His generative organ burst bringing forth semen (Retas) ; and, from this semen, proceeded waters (Āpaḥ). Agni, Vāyu, Āditya, Dik, Auṣadhivanaspatayaḥ, Candramā, Mṛtyu, and Āpaḥ are thus said to be brought into being as the guardians of the worlds with the bursting of the body of the Virāṭ Puruṣa, when it was heated by the Supreme Being. The heating would naturally be understood as the reflection (Tapaḥ) of the Supreme Being ; that should be evident even in the context of the account given in the Nāsadīya Sūkta of the Ṛgveda. These guardians are described to be the second products of the sacrifice, the first being speech (Vāk), breath (Prāṇa), sight (Cakṣu), hearing (S'rotra), hair (Lomāni) mind (Manas), the downward breath (Apāna) and semen (Retas) respectively.

The account has it that the Supreme Being had oppressed the Virāṭ Puruṣa with hunger and thirst ; the guardians of the worlds, therefore, were naturally oppressed with them. They demanded, consequently, from their Creator a place where they could rest and avail of food. Beasts like the cow and the horse were brought to them for entering, but they said these were not enough for them ; the guardians were finally satisfied when a human body was brought to them for entering. They said that that was well done (Sukṛtam) ; so the human shape is said to be a well-formed shape (Sukṛtam). This perfection of the human form for all the senses and mind to reside in and function is also corroborated by science with its march of evolved species consummating in a human being. It is quite to the point, then, if the guardians of the sense-worlds and of the mind-world should choose the human form as ideal to reside in and enjoy their Anna (food). On being asked, therefore, to enter the human body, they readily agreed. And it is stated that Agni became Vāk (speech) and entered the mouth of the human body. Vāyu (wind) became Prāṇa (breath) and entered its nostrils. Āditya (Sun) became Cakṣu (sight) and entered its eyes. Dik (directions) became S'rotra (hearing) and entered its ears. Auṣadhivanaspatayah (plants) became Lomāni (hair) and entered its skin. Candramā became Manas (mind) and entered its heart. Mṛtyu (death) became Apāna (downward-going breath) and entered its navel. And Āpaḥ (waters) became Retas (semen) and entered its organ of generation. Hunger and thirst, then, demanding a place of resort, were made co-sharers with the guardian deities that had entered the Sukṛta (well-formed) human body.

The Aitareya Upaniṣad proceeds to say that the Supreme Being, having thus created the worlds and their guardians and the Sukṛta human being, next thought of creating Anna (food). He, therefore, heated the waters and a form proceeded from them. That was Anna. The human being (Puruṣa), who had been oppressed with hunger, desired to catch the form, that fled in sheer terror, with speech, but could not do so. Had he succeeded in catching that form of food with speech, a living person, says the Aitareya Upaniṣad, would have his hunger appeased with the mere pronouncing of Anna. The Puruṣa then desired to catch the form of Anna with his Prāṇa, but could not succeed. It is not possible, therefore, for a living person to appease his hunger with smelling food. The Puruṣa could not succeed in catching the form of Anna with the eye or with the ear or with the skin or with the mind or with the organ of generation. It is, therefore, impossible for any person to appease his hunger either with the sight or with the hearing or with the touching or with the thinking of Anna or with the act of emitting semen. When, at last, says the Aitareya Upaniṣad, the Puruṣa tried to seize the form of Anna with his Apāna Prāna, he succeeded. This Apāna Prāṇa is, therefore, the consumer of Anna.

Life thus got sustenance with the consuming of Anna; but only Anna is not enough for the full existence of man. The materialist science may believe that life endures with only food and drink—with the breath resulting from chemical changes produced in the body with food and drink; but the Vedic conception of existence is in advance of it. It wants the conscious Ruler to function along with the mechanical process running side by side. Existence, therefore, as conceived by the Vedas is a unity of breath and consciousness; they do not grant also the conclusion that consciousness is an epiphenomenon of matter. We have already discussed the question in the book elsewhere and shown that matter and consciousness are only the two aspects of Agni—the great name with which the Vedas signify the Supreme Being.

The Supreme Being, therefore, reflected that He should enter the body to make it exist in the real sense. He reflected whether He could effect the entrance through one of the organs of speech, breath, sight, hearing, touch, thinking, downward-going breath (Apāna) and generation. But he thought it would be an undignified act for Him, if He did so; for it is said that the senses cannot reach Him (Yataḥ vācaḥ nivartante aprāpya manasā saha) and are devoid of that joy (Ānanda) which Brahman has, their hackneyed modes gathering only changeful phenomenal aspects which are without real bliss.

The Supreme Being, therefore, says the Aitareya Upaniṣad, entered the body by the Vidṛti door—the door of bliss where there is the division of the hair of the head. The door is also known as Brahmarandhra or the hole of Brahman. That is the place of entrance for Brahman. Human existence is thus complete. The right eye then becomes Brahman's seat in the condition of wakefulness; the deep mind is His scene of operation in the state of dream; and the space of the heart has His bliss in the state of sleep. And yet these three conditions of consciousness, to which a Jīvātmā is subjected, are spoken of by the Upaniṣad as no better than the unreal condition of dream in the theatre of Māyā, transcending which with Jñāna (true knowledge), it attains, one day, the glory of Brahman. These three states are understood as the magical warp and woof that weave the fabric of Māyā and are left behind in the understanding of a Jīvanamukta (a person emancipated even while living), so long as life endures for him on earth, and after his death, in his Brahmaprāpti (his attainment of Brahman) from which there is no return of the Jīvanamukta to the life of dust. That is the full and true Existence of man.

"Brahman is all this (Sarvaṁ khalu idaṁ Brahma)",[5] declares the Chāndogya Upanisad. "Puruṣa is all this (Puruṣaḥ eva idaṁ sarvam)", declares the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Yajurveda without hesitation. The Vedas and the Vedānta have thus reached an accord on the point. A Jīvātmā indeed takes a body and Prajāpati too runs this course as a Jīvātmā. But it has always, at its disposal, a scope to evolve with knowledge and right understanding even in the midst of the most gruelling circumstances. When fully evolved, therefore, as a Jīvanamukta, a person would not find any created object different from Brahman and would catch the glimpse of all-pervading Brahman in any embodied soul (Puruṣa). For that evolved person, says the Aitareya Upaniṣad, Brahman is not Indra — a divinity that has appealed to him so long during the stages of his imperfect spiritual evolution — but Idandra[6] ("Idam apaśyam" meaning "I have seen Him"); for he gets the vision of Brahman anywhere while behaving like an experiencer in the world of phenomena.

We have seen by now that creation proceeds with the mental sacrifice of the Virāṭ Puruṣa by the Devas, the Sādhyas and the Ṛṣis as the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Yajurveda mentions. We have also seen how the universe with a human being as its consummate product comes into being with the heating of the Virāṭ Puruṣa by the Supreme Being as mentioned in the Aitareya Upaniṣad. We also understand that Brahman is the changeless background on which this picture of the evolution of the universe is delineated. We thus see that Brahman or Ātmā, in His ancient glory, existed before the beginning of time, that the manifestation of Nature in forms, animate and inanimate, comes afterwards, and that Brahman has entered them all. It is also clear from the Puruṣa Sūkta as well as the Aitareya Upaniṣad that the Puruṣas in the multiformed organisms have Brahman as their substratum and are not different from Him. What is most noteworthy is that both the Puruṣa Sūkta and the Aitareya Upaniṣad conceive a human form as an embodiment of sacrifice and exemplify thereby that organised life can proceed in the direction of spiritual evolution, to know Brahman or Ātmā with better and more refined ideas of sacrifice on the part of a rational human being.

What remains for us to think in the light of this instruction, therefore, is that nothing is lost and nobody dies ; for Brahman is eternal life, and He is all this and all that was and all that will be. We can also see that the Yajña or the heating of the Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati is a symbol of the ideal of renunciation, pregnant with the highest thought that man must make self-sacrifice to hold out better and more prospective living to others, which is only rendering service to his uniform self as Ātmā that is not different from the selves of others. If man, endowed with reason, does not do that sacrifice, who else would? The lower organisms — the insects, the fish, the reptiles, the birds and the beasts — cannot do it, because they do not possess the necessary reason to think and evolve with thinking. Only man, endowed with mental and intellectual faculties and consequent discernment, can do it, possessing, as he does, the reason to know and decide which way the progress of the spirit lies. The Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati knows he cannot die. He, therefore, sets up the ideal of gaining by losing for human society to prosper and knows finally in this way the greatest Glory of life — the Ātmā or Brahman.

Great men like Mahātmā Gandhi have upheld such a sacrifice and led the human society to a better understanding of life, gradually filling the traps through which man is susceptible to fall into the depths of animality. They are the torch-bearers of dignified life of truth for society. They have exemplified one of the greatest of truths that Brahman is not one individual but all these individuals, to whom satisfaction should be carried with social justice, with fraternal love, with equitable distribution of Nature's resources and with democratic ideals of government. They have, side by side, led the bewildered man to tread the path of truth and faith and courage to attain his immortal status as Ātmā.

The Puruṣa Sūkta clearly instructs that the Puruṣamedha Yajña does not result merely in the production of Anna or nourishing foods such as curds and clarified butter (Ājya), but in providing to man also the spiritual food of the divine lore of the Vedas that sweetens his life-work and his evolution with thought. It instructs that the great Yajña is not only productive of birds and beasts and domestic animals, but also of the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the S'ūdras, who represent the Virāṭ Puruṣa's mouth, hands, thighs and feet respectively for the co-ordination of work in physical, intellectual and spiritual spheres. We also learn that the majesty of the cosmos is perfected with this Yajña, when Candramā takes rise from the Virāṭ Puruṣa's mind ; Sūrya from his eyes ; Vāyu and Prāṇa from his ears ; Agni from his mouth ; space from his navel ; the heavens from his head and the earth from his feet. Nobody would ever think that the Puruṣamedha Yajña, with such cosmic constituents and productions and directed to proclaim that all animate and inanimate creation is a unity with Brahman, could result into homicide. It instructs, on the contrary, that the Ṛṣis, the Sādhyas and the Devas worshipped Brahman with this Yajña to nourish the cosmic powers and the intellectual and spiritual potentialities of the first-born Puruṣa, and make him thus true to his great heritage of being a unity with Brahman. The great Sūkta finally tells us that those great ones that uphold this noble, traditional worship of the saintly ancients attain the abode of eternal bliss (Nāka) with them. It is, therefore, up to us to choose our way of worship. Surely, study and meditation and co-ordinated work with the sense of sacrifice is that way to wear out our animal instincts and render our intellectual, moral and spiritual development possible (Barhiṣi praukṣan) to let us breathe the cosmic air and become spirit-conscious with the annihilation of our deluded ego. We thus help others and help ourselves.

This is the one ancient way of worship taught by the Ṛṣis in the Puruṣa Sūkta in the S'.Y.S. A. 31. The celebrated chapter also announces to the world that the omniscient Creator or the Āditya Puruṣa (the Puruṣa in the Sun) goes on endlessly wearing the infinite forms of matter as Life, and that man, the most evolved of the lot, sharing the very spiritual constitution of the

Āditya Puruṣa, knows the immortality of the best of gods (Tan martasya devatvam ājānam agre). And the seer, the most spiritually evolved of the race of man, proclaims that he recognised the almighty Presence (Veda aham etaṁ Puruṣaṁ mahāntam Ādityavarṇam) in the refulgent Āditya Puruṣa beyond the darkness of Avidyā or ignorance (Tamasaḥ parastāt). He asserts that man transcends the shadows of death (Atimṛtyum eti) with that experience, and there is, in his opinion, no other way to obtain release (Ayanāya) without having that realisation. Though unborn, that Lord of life, says the seer, is born and reborn in the womb of the mother (Prajāpatiś carati garbhe antar ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate) in varied forms. But those wise that endeavour to realise Him, he instructs, know His native light in which the cosmic worlds are upheld, while He shines, indeed, for those that want to shine, as their esteemed leader. He had existed before the gods came into existence ; the seer, therefore, enjoins upon the man of wisdom to make obeisance to that Brahma Jyoti (Namo rucāya Brāhmaye) in the Āditya Puruṣa, whom the gods hold up for worship in meditation. That Brahma Jyoti is extolled as the Light of lights (Jyotiṣām api tat jyotiḥ)[7] by the Bhagavad Gītā. If the adorer knows, therefore, that beautiful Light of Brahman (Rucaṁ Brāhmam), the seer says, he befriends gods (Tasya devā asan vaśe) and befriends, indeed, the whole universe whose beauty and wealth are the Lord's wives (S'riśca te Lakṣmīśca te patnyau), whose day and night make the two sides of His body (Ahorātre pārśve), whose stars and constellations reveal His beautiful form (Nakṣatrāṇi rūpam) and whose heavens and earth constitute His open jaws (Aśvinau vyāttam). The adorer hopes to attain all, declares the seer, with his self-purifying Yajña known as the Puruṣamedha Yajña.

Here a question arises as to how the man of wisdom attains all this cosmic wealth, if he attains the Supreme Puruṣa. The reply to that question is : Because there is nothing different from the Supreme Puruṣa or Brahman. For Brahman, says the Sarvamedhayajña Adhyāya of the S'. Y. Saṁhitā, is, indeed, the Agni and the Āditya and the Candramā that shine and the Vāyu that blows. He is the 'white radiance of eternity' (S'ukrajyoti) that leads the initiated aspirant to the realms of eternity. And

Brahman only is declared to be the sacred knowledge of the Vedas, the celestial waters (Āpaḥ), and the Hiraṇyagarbha or Prajāpati or Virāṭ Puruṣa who arose from the waters first to undertake the sacrifice of cosmic manifestation which we have dealt with as the Puruṣamedha Yajña. All time measurable in the smallest of units (Nimeṣāḥ), it is said, has taken rise from that refulgent almighty Puruṣa (Vidyutaḥ Puruṣād adhi), whom none can comprehend above or below, in the middle or in different directions as a measured entity. His image there is none (Na tasya pratimā asti), though all the forms of the universe, animate and inanimate, are interpenetrated by Him as their inner Controller (Antaryāmī). This bright universe, the Sarvamedha Yajña Adhyāya instructs, only testifies to His glory (Yasya nāma mahad yaśaḥ). He is Īśvara, its ruler, talked of as such in His cosmic majesty, whose manifestation, indeed, all these worlds are, and He is that Prajāpati divided as Agni, Āditya and Vāyu in their organisation for the play of cosmic life. Him do the trembling heavens and earth look upon with awe as blessed (Yaṁ krandasī avasā tastabhāne abhyaikṣetāṁ manasā rejamāne). He is the resplendent Sun and the wide waters (Bṛhatīḥ āpaḥ). Nāka, the eternal abode of joy and peace, holds on as one stupefied by that Lord of unique resplendence. And He is at last witnessed by the wise, says the Śarvamedha Yajña Chapter, as that one Entity, resident in the space of the heart of man (Nihitaṁ guhā sat), where the varied demonstration of the mundane life nestles itself in its causal glory (Yatra viśvaṁ bhavati ekanīḍam) prior to its projection in worlds. In that space is the infinite play of that life's emanation in worlds in the Sāttvika, the Rājasika and the Tāmasika modes, and in that space of the heart is its quiet return (Tasmin idaṁ saṁ ca vi caiti sarvam). The wise man, in his meditation, knows that space, says the seer, as the home of Immortality (Amṛtaṁ dhāma) and obtains Brahman, the Power of universal pervasion, as even the better of Prajāpati who is still in the bondage of cosmic activities (Pituḥ pitā sat). This wise man has become the Sarvamedhayājī (the worshipper of all this as Brahman). He can now be said to be even superior to the Devas, who, in spite of their immortality, have not yet obtained the golden key to release (Mokṣa) with the true knowledge of Brahman with meditation and renunciation, and who are said to behave, therefore, as self-willed, perhaps to be born again, as the Bhagvad Gītā says, in the world of man to learn the right discipline of life for final absolution. This wise man truly knows that only Brahman is the friend (Bandhuḥ), the generator (Janitā) and organiser (Vidhātā) of all, and that Brahman alone knows, in His omniscience, all the worlds in their infinite varieties (Dhāmāni veda bhuvanāni viśvā).

The Sarvamedha Yajña Adhyāya tells us that the wise man who lives to obtain Brahman's realisation has wandered before in infinite objects and worlds and directions in quest of happiness and, finishing his arduous travel, has at last, obtained Ṛta (Truth) in that space of the heart in meditation, availing of the holy injunctions of the Vedas. His only prayer now is that Brahman grant His adorer purified intellect (Medhām) to exalt his Brahma and Kṣatra (knowledge and power); for that can be the only prayer of the wise on the path of illumination. The Puruṣamedha Yajña of the adorer has now ripened into the Sarvamedha Yajña of true wisdom and has borne, with this ripening, the fruition of his conviction that the heaven and the earth and, in fact, all theatres of activity in all directions bear the holy seal of Brahman. Having known them in their division and duality, he now knows them as a unity. Having witnessed the play of Ṛta in infinite varieties, he now cuts short that sense of extension (Ṛtasya tantuṁ vitataṁ vicṛtya), realises them all as Brahman and becomes Brahman with that realisation (Tad apaśyat tad abhavat). And the ancient memory of his eternal Being (Dhruvā Smṛtiḥ) reviving in him, he understands that he was Brahman (Tadāsīt). His Sarvamedha Yajña is thus complete.

The Nāsadīya Sūkta of the Ṛgveda, which is a piece of celebrity like the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Yajurveda, gives a very fascinating account[8] of the status of Brahman whom the Sarvamedhayājī worships. The Sūkta says that, before the beginning of creation in measurable time, there was neither non-manifestation (Asat) nor manifestation (Sat). There was neither space (Vyoma) nor the cosmic regions (Rajaḥ). When there was no support of such regions, the Nāsadīya Sūkta questions how there could be the possibility of the beings inhabiting them unhappily (Kim āvarīvaḥ kuha kasya śarman). And the Sūkta instructs that there was neither death, nor immortality, nor day, nor night, nor the deep waters, but that only that One (Tad ekam) breathed without breath (Ānīd avātam). This was the lone Power, says the Sūkta, existing indivisibly with Svadhā or Prakṛti or Māyā. Nothing else but that One was there in that epochless eternity. Even the causal state of objects is said to have been shrouded in darkness (Tama āsīt tamasā gūḷham). Much more unknown then, adds the Sūkta, was the state where cognition is possible. In this manner, all the world of movement and experience was absent. But this universe of beginning and end, which was concealed in the dark womb of the causal state that was itself shrouded in darkness, unfolded itself, says the Nāsadīya Sūkta, with the prowess of the reflection of the One, Brahman, (Tapasas tan mahinā ajāyata) of the nature of desire (Kāma). This reflection of the desiring type was the seed which actualised the cosmic manifestation, and the Sūkta instructs that the learned know, with their purified intellect,this manifestation as potential in the unmanifested condition of Prakṛti or Svadhā, already spoken of as indivisible from the Highest Being.

The manifestation then proceeded, declares the Sūkta, in all directions as a flash (Vitato raśmir eṣām). This creation, the result of the reflection of Brahman, consisted of the Jīvas and the elements like the sky. There was the creation of Anna (Svadhā) or food and its consumers. But who can tell, asks the Sūkta, how the whole show began (Kutaḥ iyaṁ visṛṣṭiḥ) and how it is upheld (Yadi vā dadhe yadi vā na) ; and it argues that not even the gods could say that, because they were of a later creation. The Sūkta concludes at last that only He, the President of this marvellous phenomenon (Asya Adhyakṣaḥ), poised in His immaculate, infinite extension (Parame vyoman), knows the mystery of that creation and its upholding, and that none else can. This President in His refulgent glory is the Āditya Puruṣa of the Puruṣamedha chapter and the Ṛta of the Sarvamedha chapter that is realised at last in the space of the heart of the wise (Gandharva).

And the Taittirīya Upanisad provides us excellent instruction in regard to the status of this Ṛta or Brahman whom the Sarvamedhayāji (worshipper of all this as Brahman) obtains as a unity in the space of his heart, where he cuts short the thread of his Saṁsāra (sense of wordly extension). The Upaniṣad knows

Brahman as Truth and infinite knowledge (Satyaṁ Jñānam anantaṁ Brahma) and almighty Ātmā from whom manifested the sky (Ākāśa). Thinking of further manifestations, it tells us that the atmosphere (Vāyu) sprang from Ākāśa ; the fire (Agni), from Vāyu ; the waters (Āpaḥ), from Agni ; the earth (Pṛthivī), from Ap ; the vegetation (Auṣadhayaḥ), from Pṛthivī ; the food (Anna), from Auṣadhi ; the semen (Retas), from Anna ; and finally man (Puruṣa), from Retas.

This man (Puruṣa) is shown by the Upaniṣad in his different physiological (Annarasamaya), vital (Prāṇamaya), psychological (Manomaya), intellectual (Vijñānamaya) and blissful (Ānandamaya) aspects, but fundamentally as one Puruṣa, at whose root lies Brahman. And this Puruṣa is the worshipper of Brahman with his Puruṣamedha and Sarvamedha Yajñas to obtain Him at last in the space of his heart to finish his cosmic journey. Brahman or Ātmā is out with His interpenetration in all, the Upaniṣad points out, with form (Sat) and without form (Asat), as defined (Niruktam) and not-defined (Aniruktam), with support (Nilayanam) and without support (Anilayanam), as conscient (Vijñānam) and nescient (Avijñānam) and as truth (Satyam) and non-truth (Anṛtam). And the Upaniṣad declares that this is the ultimate truth.[9]

We can judge from this presentation of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad that, in rising categories of evolution, stand forth those persons that, like the Puruṣamedhayājī and the Sarvamedhayājī, utilise their Prāṇa, Manas, Vijñāna and Ānanda in their physical (Annarasamaya) bodies in organising life in the universe with right sacrifice, behaviour and modes of thought. When, therefore, the Bhagavad Gītā announces to the world that Prajāpati has brought into being all persons on this earth with the heritage of the sense of sacrifice (Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā),[10] it only means that a sensible man is born to render useful service to himself and to others by the utilisation of his physical body, Prāṇa. Manas, Vijñāna and Ānanda in human society. He has then the surest hope that his shining wealth of powers (Daivī Sampad) would gradually unfold itself and make him live up to the noble plan of Brahman, which consists in his building the right social attitudes with a sense of sacrifice (Yajña) of the renunciation type. He would thus be enabled to spread out his personality ultimately in the immanence of Brahman that this great Upaniṣad recognises as the ultimate Truth.

This Ṛta (Truth) or Brahman or Paramātmā is the Hṛdaya (Heart) which Maharṣi Ramaṇa instructs when he says that the Ṛṣis know that Hṛdaya in preference to the Yogis, who are still with mind in the process of the achievement of supernatural powers (Siddhis). This Ṛta is the Saccidānanda of 'The Life Divine' of S'rī Aurobindo, obliging the initiated with the descent of the Supramental through their complete surrender to the divine Mother. This Brahman is the All-hood (Bhūmā) which Sanatkumāra reveals to Nārada in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad to find out a real solution of happiness (Yaḥ vai Bhūmā tat sukhaṁ na alpe sukham asti).[11] This Paramātmā is the inner Controller (Antaryāmī)[12] as explained by Yājñavalkya to Uddālaka Āruṇi, and the refulgent, immortal Soul (Tejomayaḥ amṛtamayaḥ Puruṣaḥ) as instructed in the sweet lore (Madhu Vidyā)[13] of Dadhyañ Ātharvaṇa in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. This Paramātmā is the Hormajda of the Zend-Avasta and the Bismillahir Rhamanir Rahim of the Koran. This Ṛta is the Law (Dhamma) of Bhagavān Buddha accessible through the annihilation of craving (Tṛṣṇā). This Paramātmā is the Divine Father in the Heavens in the faith of whose mercy Jesus Christ suffered crucifixion. This Paramātmā, the Essence, is the Absolute of Hegel—the supreme synthesis compromising all theses and antitheses. This Omniscience is the mathematically organising Mind of Sir James Jeans, that has dealt a death-blow to the orthodox scientific attitude which once sky-rocketed materialism. This Ṛta is "some unknown God" at whose altar the late S'rī Jawaharlalji worships consciously or unconsciously in his *Discovery of India* offering sacrifices to that "unknown" with his personal, national and international ideals.[14] This Ṛta or Brahman is the Satya of Mahātmā Gandhi and the "Satya" on which Bhagavān Vyāsa meditates in S'rīmad Bhāgavata in the opening verse (Satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi).[15] This Paramātmā is the Puruṣottama of the Bhagavad Gītā, who transcends the dogmatic body-sense (Kṣara Puruṣa) and the sense of even the immortal Life at the core (Kūṭastha Puruṣa) of the Jīvātmā in its transmigration.[16] And Tulasīdāsa worships only this Totality or Paramātmā as his beloved Rāma, and Tukārāma as his Pāṇḍuraṅga, and Narasiṁha and Mīrāñbāi as their Kṛṣṇa.

CHAPTER VIII

The Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī Worship of Paramātmā

THE SEER, on obtaining the fullest satisfaction as a Sarvamedhayājī, now contemplates a Vedic mental worship of Brahman for the devoted, the performance of which with a devoted mind, it is thought, shatters the adamantine fetters of the ignorance of man and leads him on to the path of spiritual enlightenment. The devoted man approaches Brahman in thought and eulogises the all-pervading Lord of Society (Gaṇapati) as the dearest of the dear (Priyāṇāṁ tvā priyapatim) and as the costliest of the treasures (Nidhīnāṁ tvā nidhipatim) of man and entreats the Lord to accept him with the gift of faith (Garbhadham) which he so earnestly cherishes. He holds out the Vedic Chandas viz. Gāyatrī, Triṣṭubh, Jagatī, Anuṣṭup, Paṅkti, Bṛhatī, Uṣṇiḥ and Kakup to carry to Him the joy of the music of the spiritual lore, for perhaps that is the noblest tradition of the creation which is brought into being by the first sages, Bharadvāja, Kaśyapa, Gotama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra and Jàmadagni, who are connected with the very life of Prajāpati. He first prays with the S'ivasaṅkalpa Mantras (prayers for the human mind to be concentrated on pure good) for the spiritual composure of his mind which, he knows, is the highest instrument through which the noble Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship can be rendered possible.

Mind, as the seer knows it, is divine in constitution, going as it does, farther than the senses of knowledge in the state of wakefulness of man and utilising them as their leader in receiving perceptions and ideas that stretch over a wide field of time. He pays the human mind a compliment for its being the most revered presence in a living person, through whose agency, men of mettle and vision conceive and bring to fruition their noblest schemes in various fields of life through sacrifices. It is mind alone that can receive the peace of spiritual enlightenment, which is prayed for by the worshipper, as it (mind) is the only entity in man which, in the opinion of the seer, is the centre of inspiration and courage and is connected with the higher conceptions of life as his immortal light. No action indeed can proceed without mind's thinking it first. Mind again has that immortal status which, the seer believes, comprehends the past, the present and the future events. The hymns of the Ṛgveda and the Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda are committed to its care, established as they are over it as the spokes of a wheel in a nave. Whatever a man can think of is only mind's work, and mind, the seer says, governs men as a proficient charioteer controls his steeds dexterously with the use of reins ; for the station of this ever youthful mind is the heart of man, that is the seat of Ātmā, and is, therefore, the fittest to receive spiritual calm, though it is the speediest of agencies in movement connected with the phenomena of life.

The adorer, praying for the peace of his mind of this description, sets it on the contemplation of the almighty Puruṣa, who breathes the air of cosmic life and invests it all in one-fourth of His Being, while His three-fourth Being is filled with immortality that defies conception and expression. The adorer tries to form a mental picture of the formless Brahman who has diversified Himself in forms, sentient and insentient, and who has become the ruler of the Virāṭ (cosmos) which springs only through Him. He tries to conceive how the first-born Virāṭ Puruṣa or Prajāpati received purification from the contemplative worship of the Ṛṣis and the gods and the Sādhyas, and how the diverse gradations of men — the learned and the heroic and the commercial and the toiling — are understood by them as constituting one cosmic living body of the Virāṭ Puruṣa along with the Sun, the moon, the fire, the space, the heavens, the earth and the various directions. He tries to conceive the great Virāṭ Yajña whose Ājya (clarified butter) was the spring, whose Havi (oblation) was the autumn and whose Idhma (fuel) was the summer. He is bewildered at the thought of the boundaries of the Virāṭ Yajña consisting of the five elements, mind and intellect, and at its Samidh (fuel) of the twelve months, the five seasons, the three worlds and the inspiring Āditya.

The adorer gets to know that his native constitution is immortal as of the almighty Creator who wears these forms of matter in a flux and is yet immortal and changeless. He meditates over the inspiring account of the spiritual experience of the seer, who has the vision of the great Puruṣa as one of Light beyond darkness (Ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt) and thinks over his injunction for man to know that Puruṣa thus for emancipation. He is told that this Light shines for those that have grown and want to grow divine in thought and behaviour and that, if that Light in known, the best of cosmic wealth in all its beauty and splendour is at his disposal for his ready use. But surely what divided use would he make of that wealth, when it stands undivided from the Being of his Lord, whose majesty the stars reveal, while the day and the night constitute His two sides and the heavens and the earth, His open jaws? He broods over all this and prays at last that his individual self be undivided from the cosmic Self of his Lord. He does not care to possess the cosmic wealth separately, but wants rather to be merged in the cosmic self of the Puruṣa which is all that wealth.

But it should be borne in mind that the fruition of a prayer depends not solely on the help received from the divine influences that ensure the adorer's victory over the Tāmasika (ignorant) modes of thought and action, but also on the ground prepared for that victory in the adorer's self itself. If he aspires to scale the heights of victorious, noble and pure character, he has to endeavour to vanquish what is dark and sinful in the march of life. He, therefore, wants to prepare his ground first. Man's mental constitution, it is obvious, is not merely Sāttvika (pure and judicious), but smacks of the Rājasika (desiring) and the Tāmasika (dark and ignorant) modes too. He has, as such, to go on warring to get over the later two modes heroically with proper discrimination. The gods personify, for such a thinker, the shining, noble qualities of man. Indra is, for him, the embodiment of heroism. Bṛhaspati stands for him as the incarnation of discriminating knowledge. And the divine Mother

Aditi personifies for him the life of perpetual goodness that is never alloyed with evil. The Vedic way of praying forestalls the admission of the whole man who is the mixture of the Daivī (good) and the Āsurī (bad) tendencies, and the Vedic religion, therefore, pays tribute to the Kṣatra (heroism) in man, that rises superior to evil and shatters it in the long run for the Brahma (genuine knowledge) to obtain a permanent station in him. With the Kṣatra and the Brahma thus realised with effort, the adorer eventually decides on his attainment of the perennial Being from the short-lived becomings of life with a victorious struggle that first knows the defeat of evil. It is, indeed, true that he is often dismayed at the might of that evil, to the extent that he feels that his attainment of good would depend purely on God's help and mercy, and he, therefore, prays for it. We all get that experience in life. This is only human, whether we call that dependence on divine mercy humility or weakness of character. But if we introspect, what do we note while the prayer bears fruition? The onslaught of evil seems to checked, but the mind that conceives it that way changes too from its feeble modes of thought to those of strength to resist the march of evil. That condition of courage appears to precede the reception of divine mercy that finally operates in the defeat of sin. We describe the phenomenon as the defeat of what is ignoble with God's grace. The psychology of the phenomenon of purification, however, reveals that the ground is prepared for the final operation. The Vedic way of prayer, in a sense, anticipates that mental process and stirs up the Kṣatra for the Brahma to operate in a manner compatible with the heroic mould of the devotee's heart.

The Vedic worshipper of Brahman, therefore, while praying to Bṛahaspati and Aditi for ensuring him success in the attainment of the majesty of spiritual life, knows full well that his way lies through tumultuous buffetting by evil and that he should be completely prepared for resisting it as a sure preliminary to all achievement of good. He pays, therefore, to Indra, the divine personification of victorious force, his grateful homage as a swift, dreadful power, dealing death with his sharpened weapon of adamant to inimical hordes, and raising a cry of victory that inspires men, possessed of mettle, to imitate him to crush the ignoble elements in their stupendous march to overcome what is noble in life. The lovers of Indra visualize him as one decided with a will to succeed in struggling with the enemy as an intrepid hero who knows no upsetting and who can, therefore, bring only good luck in the wake of his victory. Fortune favours the brave. Indra, in this way, has a fascination for all those that love heroic resistance. If the enemy presents a sword, Indra faces him with a sword. If the enemy darts arrows, Indra's superior shafts easily undo them. The armed might of this ever vigilant Indra, says the Apratiratha chapter (Sūkta) of the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship, is a perpetual terror to the enemy in this way. Whatever the strength of the enemy, it says, this ancient Indra, born of might, knows it and, calculating it well, tramples over him with a fury that overcomes all resistance. And Indra is not alone; he is surrounded, on all sides, by heroes and attendants that are ready to lay down their lives at his word of command. Indra, therefore, with his retinue, inspires the warrior, fighting in the battle of life, with courage to face his foe only to overcome him. The warrior is also spurred to action, because he believes that victorious Indra knows the adorer's prayers and would help him on his battle-field of life in his determined attack on the murderous aggressors that want to undo him. The warrior also feels confident of success, as he knows that he befriends Indra who has a desperate passion to brush away the ignoble from heaven and earth.

The worshipper, therefore, supplicates Indra to be his leader in his fight with evil, but does not forget to pray to Bṛhaspati to supply him with the force of intellect, and to Viṣṇu to fortify him with the strength of holy spirit, when he is out to face a formidable foe. His legions are then ordered in an irresistible array to stamp out the demoniacal that wants to get the better of him. And with the utmost surety, says the Apratiratha Sūkta, the divinities help him, protecting his and his fellows' chariots from the deadly shafts of inimical fiends after breaking their fronts. And, at last, the cry of victory is raised by the high-souled, divine forces in their exaltation of the good, while helpful Indra and Varuṇa, the chastisers of the evil, in company with the Ādityas and the Maruts, witness the exhilarating scene of the subjugation of evil aggressors.

What is solicited from Indra by the adorers of this noble plan of life in which evil is subdued? The Sūkta says that they pray to the bountiful Lord to impel strength in their arms and joy in the hearts of their groups, in order that their speedy war-steeds and chariots carry them to meet only decisive victory. When, in the thick of battle, confusion ensues with the breath of suspense as to whose banners shall be held aloft, they implore Indra to score victory in their favour with help that decides the enemy's destruction in the nick of time. And they entreat the Maruts to cover up the enemy's front with darkness, so that his soldiers annihilate themselves only in utter confusion. A prayer goes out from them also to the dreaded deity of disease, Apvā, to pass by the noble adorers and resort to the enemy to take full toll of him with the spread of anxiety and consternation. They beg of the Brahma force to overtake the enemy's ranks and spare none of his soldiers. The seer of the Apratiratha Sūkta blesses men, engrossed in their struggle with the evil, that they become irresistible with their superior arms and achieve speedy and decisive victory over the ignoble forces with Indra, Bṛhaspati and Aditi standing guard on their fortunes.

And, with prayer at last, the conviction arises in the hearts of the adorers that they have obtained the divine, invulnerable armours of protection with the mercy of Varuṇa, the adorable Lord of Law, while the celestial bands send cheers at their victory.

After portraying the irresistible Indra in these colours for worship by the adorer, the seer further contemplates the worship of Sūrya who, like Agni, has a double function to perform. The world has known of light through Agni and Sūrya that are the best receptacles of the Brahma Jyoti (light of Brahman) and are treated, therefore, by the Yajurveda as bridging the gap between the material and the immaterial. Sūrya is thought of as perishable in His Mūrta Svarūpa (energy body of form) and eternal in His Amūrta Svarūpa (formless, perennial energy of bliss). The energy that is known to science is the perishable energy of Sūrya. But Sūrya's imperishable Amūrta Svarūpa is the Brahma Jyoti in the opinion of the Yajurveda. Respectful offering of water (Arghya) is, therefore, made to Him by the adorer as an integral part of his daily worship (Sandhyā adoration) in view of Sūrya's worship as the Brahma Jyoti ; and thus Sūrya is offered a worship that rightly belongs to Brahman. The seers of the Vedas have thus thought of Sūrya as the representative of Brahman.

We must understand this idea of the worship of Brahman in Sūrya or Āditya more clearly before we understand the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship of Sūrya, and so it would be in the fitness of things to refer to the conception of Sūrya as given by the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Sūrya or Āditya—Āditya is the name reverentially mentioned there—is conceived by the Upaniṣad as the honey of gods (Devamadhu) lying in the lap of the heavens (Dyauḥ) that stretch in the space. The sun-beams are conceived as the honey-cells. The sun-rays that fill the east are thought of by the Upaniṣad as the eastern immortal fluids (Āpaḥ) that are produced by the hymns of the Ṛgveda from the flower of the Ṛgveda. Those sun-rays that fill the south are thought of as the southern immortal fluids that the hymns of the Yajurveda produce from the flower of the Yajurveda. The sunbeams spreading in the west, in that manner, are conceived as western immortal fluids, produced by the hymns of the Sāmaveda from the flower of the Sāmaveda, and the sun-rays in the north are spoken of as the northern immortal fluids that are produced from the flower of the Itihāsa and Purāṇa (History and Tradition) by the hymns of the fourth Veda known as the Atharvāṅgirasa. Reflection by the hymns of the Ṛgveda on the Ṛgveda, says the Upaniṣad, gives fame (Yaśa), light (Teja), sense-power (Indriya), vigour (Vīrya), food (Anna) and the like essences, which, flowing and resorting to the Sun (Āditya), have resulted in His redness. Reflection by the hymns of the Yajurveda on the Yajurveda is productive of such essences that resort to the Sun and constitute His whiteness. Reflection by the Sāma hymns and the Atharvāṅgirasa hymns similarly results into such essences that go to make up the dark colour of Āditya. But the sunbeams that proceed upward (Ūrdhva) constitute, the Upaniṣad instructs, the immortal nectars that are extracted from the Brahman-flower with implications that are highly mysterious (Guhyā evādeśāḥ); and reflection by these mysterious implications on Brahman results into fame, light, sense-power, vigour, food and the like essences, which, flowing and resorting to the Sun, appear as the dazzling brilliance in the centre of the Sun. In this way, the rays of the Sun are conceived as the immortal nectars of the Vedas and Brahman.

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad tells us that the Vasus, under the presidency of Agni, enjoy the Ṛgveda nectars of the Sun in the east ; that the Rudras, headed by Indra, enjoy the Yajurveda nectars of the Sun in the south ; that the Ādityas, under the captaincy of Varuṇa, enjoy the Sāmaveda nectars of the Sun in the west ; and that the Maruts, under the leadership of Soma, enjoy the Atharvāṅgirasa nectars of the Sun in the north. Those persons that taste these nectars, declares the Upaniṣad, obtain the satisfaction which the respective deities, connected with them, get. But the highest rung of the spiritual ladder is reached by the Sādhyas who enjoy the Brahma Rasa or the nectars of the Sun flowing upward with Brahman as their sole guide. And the Upaniṣad says that the person who knows this nectar becomes, indeed, one of the Sādhyas and obtains eternal satisfaction. Once this upward impulsion of the nectar of the luminous rays of the Sun as the Brahma Jyoti is realised by a person, there is no more rising or setting for him of the Sun but an eternal day (Na ha vā asmā udeti na nimlocati sakṛddivā haivāsmai bhavati) in the opinion of the Upaniṣad. The portion of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad that gives this holy instruction is known as the Brahmopaniṣad of a very high celebrity.[1] The great S'aṅkara of the Vedāntik fame connects this worship of Brahman with the remembrance of Praṇava[2] (the sacred sound "Aum") in meditation. The holy Gāyatrī Mantra refers to this eternal Jyoti of Brahman as the Vareṇya Bharga (adorable, sin-cleaving, beautiful light) of the inspiring Savitā. The Vedas call this spiritual light the Parama Pada of Viṣṇu or the Turīya Pāda of Ātmā—the highest abode of the eternal joy and peace of Brahman. The third Mantra of the S'.Y.S. A. 6 vividly sets forth this truth of the Brahmopaniṣad by recounting that sages yearn to reach that immortal Home where the rays of the highest luminosity of the Sun ever tend to rise (Yatra gāvaḥ bhūriśṛṅgā ayāsaḥ)—the Home that shines with unique resplendence and is the noblest seat of Viṣṇu whose glory is widely sung by His lovers (Urugāyasya Viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam avabhāri bhūri). This refulgence beyond darkness (Ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt) is prescribed for experience as the only remedy for the emancipation of man by the seer of the Mantra 18 of the S'.Y.S. A. 31.

And with this introduction to the glory of the Brahma Jyoti, revealed in the worship of the Sun by the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, we continue the thread of the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship of Sūrya as given in the fourth chapter of the same. The adorer invites Sūrya to accept his sweet offering of love, knowing that He nourishes and protects with His light-rays the animate creation and gives immortality to His faithful worshippers. He pays a high tribute of reverence to those says of power that bear aloft the omniscient Sūrya for taking cognisance of the universe ; and he prays to that great purifier that He, in His mercy, oblige the worshippers by securing them the eternal life of bliss which He so graciously orders for the person whose worship as a Sarvamedhayājī has reached consummation. And here Sūrya is, to the adorer, Varuṇa (the Lord of the Law) who, as the Ṛgveda says, cuts all the snares of the Sāttvika, the Rājasika and the Tāmasika modes to render man sinless (Anāgasaḥ) for experiencing the import of the eternal Law (Ādityavrate). He remembers the divine Aśvinas and Indra especially at this worship for making it productive of noble fruit as the worship of the saintly ancients. He is spell-bound at the marvellous beauty of the rising Sun who, as the eye of Agni, Mitra and Varuṇa, pours out rays, illuminating the heavens and the earth and the atmosphere, and makes Himself the very soul of the animate and inanimate creation. The adorer also remembers with gratitude that Sūrya is productive of the waters which the beautiful, revered Soma, as the deity of rains, brings to earth in the wake of summer to give plentiful food that alone helps the performance of a nobly planned sacrifice. He, therefore, invites Sūrya to grace his sacrifice in company with the ever youthful gods to bring him and his groups intellectual light (Manīṣā). He characterises Sūrya as Indra, the annihilator of darkness (Vṛtrahan), ruling over all He surveys as He crosses His etherial way with His all-spreading light that reveals to view the beautiful universe. And if the bright day constitutes His glory, the seer thinks, it is nonetheless revealed in the advent of a dark night, when Sūrya withdraws his rays from a world under the operation of a law.

The seer pays homage to this great Āditya, playing in the lap of the heavens, for promulgating a greater law with which he obliges the good as a friend (Mitra) and restrains the evil as a chastiser (Varuṇa). The seer of this Mantra of the S'.Y.S. A. 33 reveals Sūrya as embodying the greatest law that He is at once the eternal white radiance (Anantam anyat ruśat pājaḥ) as the Brahma Jyoti, which the sages meditate on, and the ordinary light-energy (Kṛṣṇam anyat) that the senses and the space directions (Haritaḥ) avail of in the work-a-day world. And, in the operation of that unique law, the seer sees the marvellous greatness of the Sun as an eternal entity. His revealing of the pervading, indestructible light of supreme bliss and knowledge for those that merit its comprehension constitutes His eminence as the most adorable of gods, and His supply of the inferior light (Kṛṣṇam anyat) that is calculated to run the transactions of life in the material world makes for His reputation as the greatest benefactor of the mundane life in the opinion of the seer. Only the rays, resorting to Sūrya, says he, hold the wealth of the universe and divide it between creatures. The adorers naturally, therefore, pray that they be the sharers of those rays that can make them and their progeny share the wealth. But they also pray — and the modern men holding materialistic views will be surprised at the prayer — that those rays disentangle them from sin (Aṁhasaḥ niḥpipṛta) and consequent ignominy ; this is their last prayer to Sūrya as Mitra and Varuṇa and to the divine mother Aditi as also to the divine waters and to the mother earth. And why not this prayer ? It is grounded in the conviction of the ancient Vedic seers that the refulgent Sūrya goes on making revolutions with a view to know the activities of the cosmic worlds and of their inhabitants, in order to adjust both the mortal and the immortal beings to their proper stations. And, in their conviction of this conscious organisation by the Sun, the ethical conscience of Bhārata has gained more than it has lost. Even to-day, the revolving Sun is not merely the product of gravitation to an average resident of Bhārata, as it is to a hardened materialist of another country, but is invested with a sacred halo of spirituality.

This Mahāpūjā of the Yajurveda has commenced with the Sivasaṅkalpa Mantras, instinct with the adorer's prayer to see his mind composed to the pitch of purity and good where it can adjust itself to the reception of the idea of the cosmic Puruṣa and His wealth and of His transcendence as Brahman which forms the subject-matter of the S'.Y.S. A. 31. This mind then proceeds to contemplate on the Lord of the universe as Indra, the divine personification of heroism, with whose help it can resist and grapple with evil on earth and establish its victory over it. The S'ivasaṅkalpa Sūkta of the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship is thus followed by the Puruṣa and the Uttara Nārāyaṇa Sūktas of the S'.Y.S. A. 31, which are again followed by the Apratiratha Sūkta in praise of Indra. Then follows the Maitra Sūkta, in which is explained the greatness of Mitra or Sūrya as a universal Inspirer of matter, life, mind and spirit. We have come so far and we come now to the worship of Brahman as Lord Rudra, commonly known as Bhagavān S'aṅkara.

The word "Rudra" means the liquidator of misery as also the giver of knowledge. It also means one who makes the sinners weep. Rudra is also known as "Giriśanta", which signifies one who extends happiness to all from his residence in Kailāsa or in speech or in rain. The post-Vedic idea of the three great deities viz. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara or Rudra shows Rudra in His capacity as a destroyer. Rudra or S'iva is depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa as the select deity (Iṣṭadeva) of S'rī Rāma. The ten Indriyas or Prāṇas (organs of knowledge and action) with Ātmā are also called the eleven Rudras just as the twelve months of the year (Saṁvatsara) are called the twelve Ādityas, and Agni, Pṛthivī, Vāyu, Antarikṣa (space), Āditya, Dyauḥ (heavens), Candramā and Nakṣatras (constellations) are called the eight Vasus. We have also seen in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad the Rudras mentioned as enjoying the nectar of the sun-beams in the southern direction under the leadership of Indra. And, in the S'atarudriya chapter of the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship which we are now treating, what is known most significantly is the universal pervasion of Rudra in cosmic worlds. Rudra is also shown in this celebrated chapter as the originator of Agni, Vāyu and Āditya that constitute the heart of the Devas. The almighty Brahman is, therefore, held up for worship in this chapter as Rudra ; that is our sense.

This Rudra worship of the Yajurveda with its mystic fervour predominantly stands for establishing peace in the universe and for giving final emancipation to man with genuine spiritual knowledge.

The adorers are conscious of the frailties that flesh is heir to ;

they know, however, that man can judge as a rational being the line of conduct he should follow for social well-being that is ultimately his own, and can act up to his judgment with right effort. If he yet leaves the right track, as he only too often does in his egoistic and self-willed adoption of ways that make for the satisfaction of his bestial passions, they know only too well that Rudra, in His anger, is ever prepared with His bow strung to dart His shafts of correction at such an offender. The adorers, therefore, offer their respectful salutations to the chastising Lord Rudra for man to be spared from them in the name of mercy, and pray, in all earnestness, that He may see him only with a pleased look that proceeds from the benign eyes of His blissful person functioning in bringing him only His aid of mercy. Only that look would be, they think, fitting for Him to cast at the failing man to make His "Giriśanta" name significant. They know that Rudra is omniscient and that His shafts would come upon him with certain retribution. They pray, therefore, with humility that those shafts, ready to go forth for dealing punishment, change their disposition and, sparing the erring man from annihilation, assure him health and happiness instead after putting him right softly. Rudra is, the S'atarudriya chapter says, the first divine physician whose very remembrance counteracts disease and holds out protection from tigers and demons that are referred to as Lord Agni's weapons in a different context. The adorers know again that the Āditya (Sun) of the crimson and the yellow hues, spreading His rays in all directions in the space for the delight of shepherds and water-women, is the Rudra that they are praying to, and they pray that those rays be rendered helpful in disposition with their feeling prayers.

It will now be evident to the readers that Agni, Āditya, Rudra, Varuṇa and indeed all the members of the divine pantheon, though they are talked of with different names in the Vedas, are, to the Ṛṣis, the names of one Paramātmā, to whom they pay their feeling homage in different humours. Even the rays of light (Raśmayaḥ) are talked of as the Rudras by them. It would be unjust, therefore, to hurl venomous criticism at the Ṛṣis in the belief that they worshipped different gods without knowing the central unity. They assuredly knew it as much as the sages of other climes and countries and perhaps more ; that would be the definite opinion of one who undertakes the study of the Vedas with an unbiased mind. Variety, however, makes for joy and removes monotony for the less advanced masses. The aspects of human dispositions, again, are varied. All these circumstances are perhaps better understood by the Vedic seers, and a fitting and ennobling worship in variety is consequently set up for man. This worship of Brahman with His different names responding to His different powers, therefore, points only to Brahman.

The seer of the Rudra worship further pays homage to Lord Rudra as a thousand-eyed Indra and as an ever youthful Parjanya (the deity of rain). He pays respects to Him as a matchless warrior with His retinue of the Rudras that breathe by His breath. Such a soldierly Rudra with His matted hair (Kapardina) is besought to unstring His bow and throw away His arrows and sabres, leaving their cases empty, or use them, if at all He chooses to keep them active, for the adorers' protection. He is besought not to destroy their parents and elders, their youngsters and their children, born and to be born. His mercy is besought to spare their heroic warriors, their horses and their cattle. The seer sees Lord Rudra's presence in the warlike commander of the forces, in the guardian deities of various directions and paths, in the powers that uphold beasts and trees, and in resourceful men. He offers salutations to the refulgent Lord in the name of these leaders. He humbly bows to Him as the Master of food and fields and forests and as the one Lord of creation who is competent to cut as under the adorers' bonds of birth and death with His weapons that are ever active. Rudra again is spoken of by the seer as the architect of the universe, spreading it into infinite varieties of budding creepers and roaring beasts. And He, at last, the armed guardian of the faithful, is said to baffle for them their enemy and pierce him with His arrows, though thieves, dupes, robbers, marauders, assassins and wild beasts of the forest are described as breathing the breath that only He supplies in His inscrutable plan of the organisation of the universe. The adorers tender their salutations to such an almighty and unthinkable Rudra.

With the game of punishment set in motion, the seer says, Lord Rudra reveals Himself in the waking, in the dreaming, in the sleeping, in the standing and in the sitting creatures. He appeals to the seer as the soul of the human assemblies, of the beastly hordes and of the striking forces, human and divine, chariot-ridden or otherwise. The seer sees Lord Rudra's presence revealed in different sects of men. He has His station in the deformed as well as in the well-formed, in the rude as well as in the civil, in the low as well as in the high. The architect, the chariot-builder, the potter and the blacksmith possess Him in their being as much as the Bhil, the hunter and the keeper of dogs. The seer pays homage to Lord Rudra in remembrance of this varied play of life that is His. The great Lord manifests Himself for him in the phenomena of birth and death ; yet He finally seems to him operating in granting man the purification which emancipates him from the vicious circle. Lord Rudra appears to the seer as at once the hairy and the bald, the dark-throated and the white-throated, the tiny and the large, the young and the old. He is indeed the inner controller of all. He is both the pervading and the pervaded. The fleet-footed creatures, the swiftly flowing streams and the rolling waves manifest to the seer the Lord's movement just as much as the steady waters manifest His motionlessness. It is Rudra who flows as a river and remains at rest as land. He is both the highest and the lowest, the manifested and the unmanifested life. He is all the first-born and the middle-born and the last-born. He is at the root of all as "Budhna", which is His epithet signifying support. He leads man to enjoy the mixed fruit of good and evil in the world of man. He is the sacred tie of the wedlock revealed in the bride's Maṅgalasūtra (auspicious marriage thread) and He is at the root of the restraint of a recluse. He is the soul of the Vedas and of the Vedānta. He is grain in the field and on the threshing floor. The stiff, tall trees of a forest as well as the tender blades of grass manifest only His life. He is both the sound in the word and its echo. He is the celebrated hero swiftly destroying the enemy and the steady, thoughtful leader of a mighty army in his full equipment of a steel helmet and a coat of mail fighting on a elephant or in a chariot. Rudra is both the drum and its beating stick. The seer realises the presence of the Lord in such varied phenomena and he, therefore, makes humble obeisance to the almighty Rudra possessing such a unique power of being both the governor and the governed in the highest and the lowest categories of life in the universe. He is, to the seer, the personification of the omnipotent and all-intelligent Power with His Triśūla (three-point lance) and Pināka bow.

Rudra's presence again is felt by the seer both on trival tracks and high roads, in wells, in populated areas and in the springs of the mountain valleys, in ponds and lakes, in canals and rivers, in the shadows of autumnal clouds and in light, in the heat of the summer and in the showers of the monsoon preceded by flashes and thunders of lightning. His majesty blows with the life-giving winds and with the winds that devastate earth at the time of destruction. He is indeed both the beautiful moon and the terrible Rudra. His is the crimson glow of the morning sun wearing out to the pink in the course of the day. And salutations are offered to the great Rudra in the name of all these phenomena of the universe. The seer finds Him in the blissful, holy word of the scriptures and in the terrific majesty of war and destruction. Rudra, indeed, appears to him as the one guide for man to cross to the other shore of liberation never to return to sink again in the ocean of phenomena ; for, in his experience, the great Lord alone is the originator of wordly happiness (S'ambhu) and spiritual bliss (Mayobhu), the donor of earthly prosperity and the treasure of eternal life, and the principle of good (S'iva) on earth and its transcendence (S'ivatara). He is at once the small man of the world and the sage that has gone beyond the short measures of the world with the light of genuine knowledge. Rudra is, says the seer, the holy pilgrim wandering in holy places and the inhabitant of the tender grass and foam. And, again and again, humble salutations are made by him to that omnipresent Rudra in memory of these majestic functions of His.

Rudra appears to the seer thirsting in the scorching sands of the desert and floating happily on the river, dwelling on the rocks and on the sea. He is in the herd of the cows and in the cow-shed. He is in the bed and in the womb. He is in the depths of the heart of man and in the drops of dew. He inhabits the dry logs of wood as well as the green trees. He fills the dust and the pollen. He is the soul of destruction as well as life in the tender grass. He is the soul of the Veḍavāgni (fire of the sea) as well as of the Kalpāgni (fire of time in its measure as

Kalpa). He is life in the leaf and its withering on its ground of rest. He is the zeal of the industrious as well as the vehemence of the punishing. He brings sinners to grief. Rudra is the soul of the trinity of Agni, Vāyu and Āditya which is the heart of the gods. He distinguishes the holy from the sinning and destroys sin. The seer offers salutations to the omnipresent and omniscient Rudra in the knowledge of such realisation, and begs of the refulgent chastiser of the evil that creatures, high and low, enjoy immunity from fear and disease through His grace. He prays to the Lord, the resort of the heroic and the noble, to bless the bipeds and the quadrupeds and, indeed, all other creatures in the habitable areas of the universe with health and prosprity, that peace may reign in them. The seer invokes Rudra's blessed power in suppressing epidemics and in spreading health, animation and joy. He prays to Him for the frustration of the angry and the spiteful for bringing joy to human society. The adorers desire Him to conceal His Triśūla, His symbol of dread, on a lofty tree, bear His Pināka bow and come to them with a supremely pleased mind. They pray that they never become the victims of His wrath, but be able to throw, at the distance of a thousand miles, the arrows of innumerable malignant Rudras on earth, in the space and in the heavens. They pray to the Lord to give them the strength to throw back far away the arrows aimed at them by the aggressive Rudras hiding in trees, on thoroughfares and in holy places in all directions. They pray that they can overcome the dreaded Rudras that spread diseases through foods and drinks. They pray finally with folded hands, facing all the directions, to the omnipotent Rudra, who gives them rains from the heavens and Vāyu (air) from the space and food from the earth, to graciously guard them from evil and destroy it.

Rudra is further invited to grace the worship in company with His great sister Ambikā ; for, the devotee thinks, with the great Tryambaka's propitiation in that manner, the three worlds that stand for His three eyes can wear a pleased look for life in those spheres and, affording it habitation, supply man, its evolved pattern, noble impulses and resolute will to attain greater majesty. For none can cure, says the seer, the maladies of the body and of the mind and make man immune from them for securing the peace of mind with blessings for his wordly prosperity as ably as that supreme Physician. Rudra's, indeed, he thinks, is the potent drug (Bheṣaja) to remove disease from the adorer's cattle, horses and fellows. The almighty Tryambaka can spread His perfume (Sugandhim) that way and assist nourishment (Puṣṭivardhanam). That is the seer's experience. Rudra's worship is, therefore, proposed for man to secure him immunity from premature death (Bandhanāt mṛtyor mukṣīya) and prepare him for obtaining eternal life (Amṛta). Even as the cucumber (Urvārukam iva) is released from a leafy tangle, man, it is said, can obtain release from the snares of phenomena with the worship of Tryambaka. The worship is also very popular among the spinsters of Bhārata, who, it is believed, obtain good husbands with His propitiation. And finally, Rudra is begged to change His penalising aspect with this special Mahāpūjā (great worship) and operate in meting out the adorer only fruits that are sweet both in phenomenal and spiritual spheres, and an assurance for his longevity such as was enjoyed by the sages Jamadagni and Kaśyapa.

The Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī text then tells us about the graded manifestation of Viśvakarmā (the Creator of the universe). Viśvakarmā, it says, first manifested Himself as Āditya (Sun) whose inner light He is in cosmic organisation. Next arose Agni as the symbol of His power. And the third to come in the series was Parjanya, the lórd of vegetation, bearing the embryo of waters (Ap). We also come across here the best of Vedic instruction that, the seer says, is given to men by Viśvakarmā. The sense of the Mantra of that celebrated instruction is as follows :

> "Oh Jīvas, you are enveloped in foggy ignorance or Avidyā (Nīhāreṇa prāvṛtāḥ) whose working passes comprehension in the sense that it is neither true nor untrue. You babble, therefore, words (jalpyāḥ) that are useless and derogatory to the building of a consistent thought that can help the spiritual plan of life. You are self-indulgent and carry satisfaction only to your animal instincts by yielding to the pleasures of senses (Asutṛpaḥ). You want to attain heaven for obtaining greater happiness of that particular nature and, therefore, contemplate and carry out sacrifices in which you praise weapons (Ukthaśāsaḥ) for killing animals as a necessary part of

that programme. When folly dominates your thought and behaviour in this manner, you cannot know Paramātmā who has brought into being this entire creation (Na taṁ vidātha ya imā jajāna) and has deeply penetrated through its meanest of particles. That Paramātmā is concealed in you; only He is your genuine self as Ātmā, and not your ego which is the self of delusion (Anyat yuṣmākam antaraṁ babhūva)."

The great Mantra speaks for itself. It represents the genuine Vedic conception of what a sacrificer or adorer should be like in a universe which, in its minutest constitution as well as in its spacious worlds, is only Puruṣa (Puruṣa eva idaṁ sarvam) who is yet beyond it as immaculate and immortal, blissful Existence (Tripād ūrdhva udait Puruṣaḥ). The adorer knows as the truth of his very soul that he is even such a Jīva as should profit by this instruction of genuine knowledge given by Viśvakarmā for obtaining the life of the spirit. The material sacrifices, and those of animals especially, are held as misguided and silly by the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad also, because they are perishable and transitory (Plavā hyete aḍṛdhā yajñarūpāḥ).[3] The Upaniṣad contemplates a sense of the perennial bliss of spiritual life which, it says, the material sacrifices cannot assure. It insists, therefore, on Tapa (restraint in life) and S'raddhā (faith) and the solitary life of calm thinking for an aspirant to the realisation of the truthful life of Brahman. These qualities, says the Upaniṣad, help him obtain the changeless and immortal Puruṣa after his death through the path of illumination which is presided over by Sūrya; for they bring him the composure of mind that is oblivious of the relish of the transient pleasures of the senses (Sūryadvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti yatrāmṛtaḥ sa Puruṣo hyavyayātmā).[4] We note this very sense in the instruction under review of the Mantra 31 of the S'.Y.S. A. 17 of high celebrity in the Mahāpūjā.

But the adorer is only too conscious of having offended the law at times and his conscience bites him on that account. He, therefore, proposes to atone for the sins committed by him by thinking of sacrificing, in an angry vein, even certain parts of his erring and sinful body with the text of a few Mantras of the Aśvamedha Yajña for the propitiation of divinities such as

Paṣupati, Īśāna, Ugra, Yama and others. He thus unburdens his mind of the load of sin in that manner. He remembers the constituents of his body—his hair, skin, blood, fat, flesh, veins and arteries, bones, marrow and semen, and makes offerings in their names for their proper functioning.

With a mind relieved in that way and purified by the remembrance of the all-pervading Puruṣa of the Puruṣa Sūkta with His powerful personifications like Indra, Āditya and Rudradeva, the adorer now thinks of the fruit which his great worship would ensure him. Let us then take stock of that fruit. The S'.Y.S. A.18 is a part of the famous text constituting the Aṣṭādhyāyī Rudra worship which deals with this subject. We now proceed, therefore, to the details of the Yajñaphala, but the Yajña, in this context, is to be understood from its narrowest to its widest connotation.

The adorer wants his Yajña to grant him food and drink and Lord Agni's sympathetic sanction for it. The Yajña must guarantee for him spiritual meditation and firm resolve. It must give him the sweet articulation of and the concentrated power of hearing the Vedic hymns of prayer. It must unite him with the highest illumination. Harmoniously functioning Prāṇa in his body, long life, sound mind and sweet speech, sharp vision and audition, and, indeed, the strength of the senses of knowledge and action are prayed for. The adorer wants a lustrous and beautiful, bony body, in order that it may serve him as an armour against the onslaughts of disease and of the enemy and also stand him in good stead to obtain the knowledge of Ātmā.

The adorer, at the outset, wants a high status in society and rulership. He also wants necessary anger to overcome evil, and great sobriety. He wants victorious power, learning and reputation, a large family and a happy home, and peace and plenty. He wants a beautiful dawn to start his happy day's work after a good night's rest. He wants fearlessness and happy friendship in pleasant groups. He wants excellent medicines to cure his maladies and keep him in excellent health. He wants all this wordly happiness, but he wants the attainment of immortality (Amṛtam) and the Truthful Law (Ṛta) at last.

His Yajña is invited to give him upholding, restraining and protective strength, manliness and fortitude. He would have the world know him as a friend. He desires that he must be proficient in arts and sciences. He wants both earthly and spiritual happiness (S'aṁ ca mayaś ca), and his endeavours to achieve progress in matters, temporal and spiritual, to be crowned with success. He wants his gardens and farms to thrive under a helpful monsoon. He wants their yields, accompanied with milk and milk-products and honey, to be spread on the table for being shared by him in social groups. He wants jewellery and magnificence and the wealth of cattle. He wants resourcefulness, energy and right decisions to assist him in his duties and prays for unembarrassing fields of movement and action.

The sacrificer wants to guard well what is already possessed and to possess what is not attained. He wants the power to obtain the knowledge of the past and the future happenings. He desires that his fields should yield him rich crops of paddy, barley, beans, sesamum seeds, grams, S'yāmāka and Nīvāra grains, and of wheat and pulses. He wants heaps of earth, sand and stone at his disposal and wants to own forests and mountains. He wants a vast store of gold and steel, of lead, brass and tin. He must have fire, water and vegetation available for ready use, and domestic and wild animals to render him service. He wants strength to act well, and happy movements. He prays that Agni, Indra, Soma, Savitā, Sarasvatī, Pūṣan, Bṛhaspati, Mitrāvaruṇa, Dhātā, Tvaṣṭā, Maruts and all other divinities are gracious to him. He wants the earth, the space, the stars, the planets, the constellations, the directions and the months of the year to be congenial to him. He must have means, resources and equipment for celebrating various kinds of sacrifices. He longs for happy seasons for assuring him a convenient life. He wants the noble Bṛhadrathantara Sāma hymns to attune his life to spiritual peace after a successful observance of religious rites and abstinences.

The adorer feels that he has attained vitality in the course of time with prayer. He has his eyes and ears regulated. He obtains the Vedic knowledge and light to ensure him a life in heaven. He restrains his mind and speech, becomes aware of the status of Ātmā and becomes immortal under the rule of Prajāpati. He achieves his progressive rise in this manner through the grace of the Yajña.

These are the details of the fruit that the adorer cherishes and obtains through prayer. What is, however, the most remarkable fruit that he wishes to obtain with the mercy of the Lord, who is the incarnation of the Yajña, may be very briefly summarised. It is the health of body and mind for his being a serviceable unit in a friendly family and society, the attainment of the valorous part of human nature with which to subdue evil to assure a truly happy life to himself and to his fellows, and, above all, the eternally pleased life of Ātmā.

We have thus far given the substance of the eight chapters of the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī worship or the Mahāpūjā of Brahman and now propose to give the sense of the Mantras of the chapter known as the S'ānti Adhyāya, which constitute the 36th Adhyāya of the S'.Y. Saṁhitā. The prayer of the adorer, embodied in that chapter, runs as follows :

"(1) I seek the refuge of speech which is of the nature of the Ṛgveda, the refuge of mind that is of the nature of the Yajurveda, and the refuge of Prāṇa that is of the nature of the Sāmaveda. I seek the support of the right vision and of the right audition. I want to be united with the right power of speech, of mind, of body and of respiration. Let this much be graciously granted by the Lord! (2) If my eyes have not seen rightly, if my mind has erred in thinking and conceiving rightly and if my heart happens to be in a state of bewilderment, may Bṛhaspati make them consummate ! May the Lord of the universe be congenial to us (S'aṁ no bhavatu bhuvanasya yaspatiḥ)! (3) We meditate on the worshipful and sin-cleaving light and prowess of Lord Savitā (Savitur vareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi), who inspires the earth (Bhūḥ), the space (Bhuvaḥ) and the heavens (Svaḥ), in order to obtain the illumination of evolved forms of thought (Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt). (4) What is indeed that pleasing prayer, what is that fine act of sacrifice which can make miraculous Indra, who ever helps development (Sadāvṛdhaḥ), our friend ? (5) Oh truthful Indra, what is that highest of drink offerings that supplies to you intoxication and impulsion to kill strong demons and distribute their treasure amongst us ? (6) Oh Indra, we are your friends and propitiate you with hymns of praise. You are our protector and you, therefore, assume a number of forms to face us for our protection. (7) Oh raining

Indra, what is the consecration that is instrumental in wooing you to bring prosperity to us who sing in your praise? (8) The Lord of the universe shines as the Sun (Indro viśvasya rājati). May He bring happiness to our men and beasts! (9) May Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryamā, Indra, Bṛhaspati and Lord Viṣṇu of wide tread (Urukramaḥ) be congenial to us! (10) May Vāyu blow and Sūrya shine congenially for us! May Parjanya bring us happy showers with a thunder! (11) May it be ordained that we have happy days and nights! May Indra and Agni bring us happy protection! May Indra and Varuṇa, pleased with our offerings, make us happy May Indra and Pūṣan be congenial to us in granting food! May Indra and Soma make us happy fathers and maintain us in perfect health with the removal of disease and danger! (12) May divine waters assure us happy fruits and make for us a happy drink! May they flow happily for us so as to remove our disease and danger! (13) Oh Earth that extend far and wide, constitute a happy dwelling place for us with all your thorns removed and secure us happiness. (14) Oh blissful Waters, install us well in a happy state of mind and let us experience your bliss, so that we may obtain the loveliest vision—the vision of Brahman (Mahe raṇāya cakṣase). (15) Oh Waters, give us here on this earth a share in your bliss that is of the most exalted nature (S'ivatamaḥ rasaḥ), even as doting mothers suckle their infants (Uśatīr iva mātaraḥ). (16) Oh Waters, let us enjoy to our heart's content the supreme bliss, only a part of which functions in carrying satisfaction to life from its lowest specimen to its highest right up to Brahmā; for to carry bliss to life is your mission. (17) May it be graciously ordained by Paramātmā that I attain S'ānti (the peace of soul), which is translated into all these heavens and space and earth, into water and vegetation, into all the gods and, indeed, into the whole universe and which is S'ānti by its very nature (S'āntir eva śāntiḥ), as my all-transcending spiritual bliss! (18) Oh Lord of mighty prowess (Mahāvīra Deva), sustain me with strength while I falter. May all creatures look upon me with a friendly eye and may I, in my turn, look upon them as my friends! May we look upon one another as friends! (19) Oh valorous Lord, do fill the gaps of discrepancies in my life, that I may live long in the grace of your benign eye. (20) Oh Agni, I offer salutations to your purifying, radiant light which attracts all essences and illuminates all objects (Arciṣe). Bring us only purity and good. May your flames burn only the evil-minded! (21) Oh Lord, I salute you in the names of your forms of lightning and thunder (Namas te astu vidyute namas te stanayitnave) and in the name of the purpose for which you behave as rising heavenward (Namas te bhagavan astu yataḥ svaḥ samīhase). (22) Oh Lord, give us the fullest immunity from the evils from which you behave as protecting us (Yato yataḥ samīhase tato no abhayaṁ kuru). Bring good to our progeny and beasts. (23) Oh Varuṇa (adorable Paramātman), let waters and vegetation act only as friends with us, reserving their enmity for those (offenders of your law) that hate us and whom we hate. (24) Lo, there rises in the east Lord Savitā, in whom reposes the immaculate, white radiance of Brahman (S'ukram), for the operation of good for those that share in divine life (Devahitam). May we, through His grace, live a hundred years' prosperous life with sound and unerring vision and audition and speech in the atmosphere of freedom (Paśyema śaradaḥ śataṁ jīvema śaradaḥ śataṁ śṛṇuyāma śaradaḥ śataṁ prabravāma śaradaḥ śatam adīnāḥ syāma śaradaḥ śatam)! May we live even longer than that span of life (Bhūyaśca śaradaḥ śatāt)!

This is the import of the Rudrāṣṭādhyāyī-worship text of the Yajurveda, the chanting of the Mantras of which holds spell-bound the hundreds and thousands of the prayerful people of Bhārata in the temples of Lord S'iva. No Vedic mass worship of Paramātmā is held in higher esteem than this traditional Abhiṣeka Pūja of the Lord by the people performed in a highly reverential attitude in an atmosphere that generates instinctive love for the Lord and purity of mind. The high and the low of such devoted worshippers assemble on the Mahāśivarātrī nights in the temples of Lord S'iva to listen to the chant, desiring to achieve noble results in life and warding off evil that way. But those that have matured in the sense of worship hear in that majestic chant the note of redemption from the phenomenal values of the humdrum of life and start growing desireless.

To a person who wants to evolve spiritually as a necessity of his being, prayer will indeed seem to be the one essence, the hold of which reveals the beauty of spiritual progress. He sets up its course in regular sessions and finds that his oppression of evil slowly wears away. The projection of alluring phenomena, that formerly took a violent toll of his mind and enforced a compulsory subjection to their sweet poison, begins to straighten its curves with the auspicious start. This is only too evident to the prayerful person. He begins to believe that he can overcome temptations with the hold of prayer. He starts holy recitations with greater joy consequent upon his experience of victory, which he formerly so feverishly wished but could not achieve. He thinks on the meaning of the holy texts and grows silent with the load. He gradually sinks into a sustained thinking of that kind. The operation is so fascinating that he loves to do it with pleasure with greater zest, day by day, and wants to sit up longer hours in holy contemplation. He finds the thick veils, screening him from the life of the spirit, thinning down into gossamer ones. The circumstances, that had compelled his precipitous fall before he began his course of prayer, begin to be scared away. He now wills a holy course of life. Where he succumbed, he begins to find a victorious escape. He becomes more and more confident of defeating temptations in the face of their stubborn resistance. He often succeeds.

He becomes, to some extent, a thinker and comes to analyse as such this phenomenon of success. He does find that his mind, previously weak enough to lick the poisoned honey of a wrong situation and to force his senses to be possessed, as it were, with excitement that demanded an unsavoury act, has been hardened now and can think and think rationally that the unsocial, perhaps criminal, act should be avoided. His mind gets the vigour to pick up in a crisis, even while he is unwatched, the civic sense which a man generally shows when he is watched all round. And he politely refuses the illegal gratification. Further refinement in the phases of his life comes in the wake of this refusal. His mind has now better modes of ideas and conceptions. Good thinking and purity of acts begin to substitute unholy thoughts and wrong deeds that he formerly relished. He prays more sincerely now. He becomes more silent and meditative. He knows that he has now come to a stage of development where he no longer needs the particular hour to come for his holy programme of offering prayers, but he has built up, as it were, a holy mood which comes self-sought. And the composure that a millionaire experiences with his wealth, he now experiences with the advent of this holy mood. This state of mind is fraught with immense joy and needs repetition. The compulsion is felt. His soul slips into that mood so frequently that the demands of his practical, day-to-day life appear to suffer ; but the suffering is not felt.

He goes slow in picking up acquaintances ; and the things he wanted in plenty for luxury, he now actually shuns as a cumbrance. He is satisfied with the barest necessity of food and yet its relish is greater than that of the dainty dishes that he formerly craved for and was not yet satisfied with. He leaves gaudy dresses, for they simply annoy him. He must have only a clean, simple wear. His toilet is nil and he wants only a few things to make up his furniture for work and rest.

His prayerful mood has now a greater hold on him—a longer sway on him. Purity appears to have become natural—something that is natural as self. He compares and contrasts this naturalness of the purity of thought and action with that which he formerly simulated in society, when he was heading on merely with the prestige sense and no further. What has intervened then to make up a glaring difference between the two conditions ? He knows with certainty that his holy recitations, holding fascination for him, were silently absorbed and assimilated into his very being and that they marked the beginning of the change of the status of his mind. Wisdom gradually grew in him, while they were being assimilated, and built up his positive mood of the silent contemplation of the spiritual significance of the universe which is interpenetrated with Brahman. What he formerly thought he must certainly be in possession of as an economic and biological necessity, regardless of the fact that it was sin to indulge in a forbidden pleasure which the law too holds penal, he now actually abandons ; for he instinctively feels that he would spiritually collapse with the fearful oppression of the indulgence. Furthermore, he actually fears now to sink into the abysmal depths of that darkness, from which he could not easily emerge in the sunlight of his holy contemplation according to schedule. This he certainly cannot afford. He cannot let go his dear God for that flimsy nothing of a stupid gratification which would not let him pray.

This is a remarkable stage of enlightenment which he has built up. He must have his prayers. If certain pleasures of life are denied to him by circumstances in the world's right way—call it the fulfilment of his previous wrong Karma or the pitiless constancy of his unaccountable fate—, that denial has now become an occasion of joy for him. He does not want to negate it with the contribution of secret, sinful indulgence. He is now fattened in spirit. And if he does not come out, at this stage, in the open for recognition with the exhibition of this holy life that he has built up, so much the better for him; for an infinite wealth of the spirit is still lying in wait for him to be explored and it sends out secret messages to his heart to unravel it. He can obtain the treasure better alone and unattended. Whatever he does in this regard, his one necessity that can never be gainsaid is that he should unflinchingly continue the course of purity and insist on it, now that he can enjoy it as something natural. He has now to face life with its glamours only that way, keeping vigilant all the time that he does not slip on a slippery ground. Occasions for taking the sweet poison of a sinful indulgence seem to multiply with his grimmer determination to remain pure, but he manages them well with a resolute will and, failing in that will, with divine mercy that only he can understand. He now loves only holy meditation above all. His days pass well and his nights are pleasant. He has lost the annoyance that the denial of sensuous pleasures had given him. If he belongs to the public life, he feels that God sustains him in it too, as in his private life, and that God is the only Reality, his hold on Whom he should never relax, lest that surest guarantee against his capital involvement in the dross should fail.

This is the next important stage that stabilises him in the higher regions of Dhyāna (meditation). He has weighed things well and the scales have turned in favour of the spiritual joy which he wants as the fundamental necessity of his being, though he still feels that he must sustain himself with such humble food and drink as can hold his body and soul together under a simple roof. But he has experiences, in due course, that he gets food and drink and shelter when he wants them, even without his effort to obtain them. They seem to obey some intrinsic power of his Master's plan of the distribution of the wealth of His universe and are ready for him, wherever he chooses to go. He begins to experience further that whatever he desires is before him. He gets repeated experiences of this phenomenon. And now commences a critical stage for him. If he is won over by these achievements and if he attends to them further in the name of his competence in the field of Yoga, he fritters away his spiritual energy to utter inconsequence. If not, the life of the spirit comes on with a ponderous might to engulf his human weaknesses and permits him to forget himself in meditation. One such occasion, however short, of not being conscious of even the gist of the holy Mantra of his prayer in meditation is the natural development of his Dhyāna, which he first undertook for consciously baffling what is evil in thought and substituting it with the bright thoughts of what is good in life and of Paramātmā as supreme good in life. He was all joy with conscious contemplation of this nature and enjoyed sweet, silent raptures that far outweighed the delights of the gratifications of the flesh with their hollowness manifested to the very core. But what is this sweeter forgetfulness of even the conscious, one-pointed meditation of the holy Mantra of spiritual instruction and of himself?

This is the most remarkable experience—this experience of forgetfulness that is understood as conscious experience after the hold of that forgetfulness is no more. This is Samādhi in which time is no longer a yardstick for measuring ideas and conceptions, however resplendent they are and whatever conscious satisfaction they bring to his spirit. This mathematical or scientific time is absent in his Samādhi, even as his experience of thinking an idea is absent. There is only the eternity and uniformity of Ātmā then with him. It is the one condition in which he does not understand himself as different from others. This is the Bhūmā (full immensity) which the sage Sanatkumāra instructs to Nārada in the seventh chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad as real happiness (Yo vai Bhūmā tat sukham), distinguishing it from the mundane experiences that are changeful and poignant in the flux of life (na alpe sukham asti). This is the Madhu Vidyā (honeyed lore of the Soul) which the sage Dadhyaṅ Ātharvaṇa instructs in the fifth Brāhmaṇa of the second chapter of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. For he is then with the immortal Inner Controller

(Ātmā antaryāmī amṛtaḥ) that is described by the sage Yājña-valkya to Uddālaka Āruṇi in the seventh Brāhmaṇa of the third chapter of that Upaniṣad. It is a culminating experience, transcending space and time, possible only in Samādhi. This is the Parā Vidyā (the supreme spiritual lore), to which all holy knowledge as conscious instruction or enlightenment (Aparā Vidyā) is but a prelude. It is seen that a person grows luminous and beautiful in looks after having this experience but once. For a long time, however, the wearisome periods of sense-perceptions and intellectual surmises, consequent upon perceptions and ideas, continue to be interspersed with the stuff of his spiritual bliss and disturb him; but the evolved person has obtained the necessary placidity of intellect that continues to refine his understanding and he gets over the disturbance, refusing to be retracted from his goal. The tumult of his crude passions had long been subdued, but the travail of changeful dispositions continued and he loathed it. That flux of moods seems now to make room for some permanent, superior consciousness of his mind. In rare, victorious moments, flashes of the visions of Ṛta (Truth) occur to him more perhaps as the grace of Paramātmā than as his merited share consequent upon his effort. They give him, to some extent, the intuitive comprehension of the spiritual constitution of the universe and its Creator's plan of evolution.

And solitude is now his greatest necessity. Morality has now become ingrained in his very being. Disinterested love for humanity now compels the barriers of his narrow communal bias to fall away. He is now a saint and belongs as such, with the sublime status of his mind, more to humanity at large than to his domestic, social or national groups. He may, in this state, work actively for the good of others in the broad field of life or continue to remain confined to his solitary cell or be a silent wanderer sending only constructive vibrations of good wishes and blessings for good to operate on earth and in the universe. Wherever he is geographically, he is perfectly happy and well-poised and does not crave for any wordly object, for he is, to a very large extent, complete now in his Ātmā that is all the manifested and unmanifested universe.

But then comes the hardest of tests under which he appears for a moment to waver, but he soon gets back his supreme balance and emerges a hero in the struggle. And he has now established his victory over evil for good. The periods of his Samādhi become of longer duration. If the tests of the phenomenal life are hard, his conviction that all is uniform Ātmā without duality and difference sucks the venom of their operation and leaves only the nectar of moral victory for him. The remaining years of his life and a few more re-incarnations decide him a final victor. And yet his spiritual emancipation and his achievement of eternal life are understood by him more as a matter of the grace of Paramātmā than his rightful claim, resulting from his effort in this theatre of inscrutable (Acintya) Māyā.

How did his consecration begin? How did he get assistance at the critical juncture? How did the clouds scatter away and leave his horizon clear for the reading of the true values of life and spirit? How could he meditate steadily on the enlightening instruction of his sacred Mantra with a composed mind in the whirlpool of his restlessly crowding ideas and memories pertaining to his life of this world? Above all, how did he get that sweet forgetfulness of both good and evil in Samādhi? These are all the problems that can never obtain a clear-cut solution either exclusively from the Karma-theory or the Bhakti-theory or the Jñāna-theory. But a part of the solution is that he was somehow drawn to prayers and that his prayers have helped—that the inspiration carried by the Mantras of the holy Vedas or by the Kalmas of the holy Koran or by the Psalms of the holy Bible has helped in a way that defies clear analysis. The higher flights of the soul ensue for a veteran sage, but the sage first began with his prayers either in his present or in one of his previous incarnations. This Mahāpūjā then, as the crest of the Vedic worships, bears the palm of leadership in the formative stage of an Āryan's spirit-consciousness.

CHAPTER IX

The Philosophy of the Yajurveda (The Īśa Upaniṣad)

BEFORE ENTERING into the discussion of the philosophy of the Yajurveda, it is good to learn the gist of the 17 Mantras of the S'.Y.S. A. 40 (or the Īśa Upaniṣad as it is generally known) that offer that philosophy. It is as follows :

(1) Whatever exists in the universe should be thought of only as Paramātmā. The objects of senses should be enjoyed with a sense of renunciation. The wealth of another person should never be coveted.

(2) Man may desire to live for a hundred years performing holy actions with such a discipline in life. The life of action will not then put him in bondage, but will give him eternal release.

(3) Those persons that ruin their souls by following the course of self-aggrandisement obtain gloomy worlds after death.

(4) Ātmā or Brahman is steady and uniform, immortal and changeless, and the senses of knowledge cannot obtain It. Yet It is speedier than the swiftly moving mind and goes beyond it and the senses. Sutrātmā or the cosmic Prāṇa upholds activity in such Ātmā.

(5) Ātmā both moves and does not move. It is both far and near. It is both inside and outside all.

(6) The person, who knows that Ātmā is all this universe and, therefore, sees all beings in his self and his self in others' selves, goes beyond doubt and uncertainty.

(7) Where is delusion and grief for a seer who is convinced

of the truth of unity all round by experiencing all beings as non-dual Ātmā ?

(8) This Ātmā is refulgent, bodiless, woundless, muscleless and pure. Sin cannot corrupt It. It is omniscient, all-intelligent, self-existing and all-pervading. It upholds all things in their adequate significance for the use of all for endless time.

(9) Those persons who cherish the changeful aspect of life without confidence in the immortality of Ātmā obtain dense darkness ; but denser darkness obtain they that, wedded only to the truth of immortal Ātmā, neglect the relative truths of the facts of life.

(10) Sages tell of the different fruits that these two beliefs bring to their respective upholders. We have heard of these fruits from them.

(11) When the contents of both the beliefs are co-ordinated and understood by a person as parts constituting a whole constructive plan, the belief in change only lets him cross his death easily and the belief in the immortality of Ātmā carries him to the experience of immortality.

(12) Those persons who offer worship solely with the object of obtaining the joys of heaven enter dense darkness; but denser darkness obtain they that give up their sacred work and duty on earth in the thought of immortal Ātmā.

(13) Sages tell of the different fruits that these beliefs bring to their respective upholders. We have heard of these fruits from them.

(14) When the contents of both these beliefs are harmoniously blended and understood by a person as operating only in one mighty scheme of progress, the joys of heaven are deemed as terminating and, therefore, not the sole object of his endeavour, and the belief in the immortality of Ātmā leads him, through knowledge and right discipline in life, to the experience of immortality where transmigration ends.

(15) May my Prāṇa obtain the immortal Prāṇa ! May my body be reduced to ashes ! Aum ! Oh, Jīvātmā, remember your acts. Remember 'Aum' for obtaining the holy world you aspire to.

(16) Divine Agni ! lead us by the path of illumination for obtaining the fullest wealth of the spirit. You know all the

ways of release. Remove the shackles of our sins from us. We pray to you again and again.

(17) The mouth of the immortal Puruṣa is concealed by the golden disc of the Sun. I am the same Puruṣa in this body as the Puruṣa in the Sun.

If prayer with inspiring Mantras leads a person to contemplate on the good of life to ameliorate his spiritual destiny and fulfil his mission in his sojourn in cosmic worlds, what is the spiritual spiral that his understanding builds up? Surely he lives as a product of phenomena with instincts that flesh and blood give and thoughts that they generate, but he knows that there is the animating spirit within him that watches the operation and acts as a wise guide for his intelligence and reason to utilise them in enlightened ways. If his instincts are crude and passions rebellious, there is the soul within to control and sublimate them. Falling and rising and falling repeatedly but to rise at last is, therefore, what he understands as the way of his progress. Each depression of his has a parallel ground of elevation. Sign-posts showing his way to heights are prominently set up on his evolutionary way and his every wrong-doing has its necessary function to stir up the depths of his spirit for bringing him the inner voice to leave it, rise above it and breathe the perfumed air of noble life.

His misfortunes and anxieties, though seemingly unbearable, are yet borne patiently under the wise rule of his Ātmā. They are invariably followed by good luck and by the peace of mind at the moments when he least expects them. How has this become possible? He seems to dive deep into the mysterious working of his fate which, after all, he recognises as one that he only has built up with his ideology and work. That a good Karma (action) is followed by good and an evil one by evil becomes his ultimate conviction. Nothing on earth appears steady to him — neither the roseate circumstances that make him roll in luxury nor the thorny pricks that shake him up with an agonising violence. If he had believed in both these in his initial stages, he now comes to a ground where he loses faith in both and, though he seems to be elated and depressed with either through the mere force of habit, he finds that there is some other force in him that guarantees him a balance and a poise and lets him wait for the grace of Paramātmā. He awaits it quietly and does not care how long he waits, for he is sure that it will come. He has also a feeling that, when that grace comes, it will be felt sweeter than the good luck that the world holds dear and would be fatal to the bad luck that all abhor. He waits on like the beggar girl in Gītānjali who dreams "of the sudden splendour of thy (Lord's) coming—all the lights ablaze, golden pennons flying over the car and they (the passers by) at the roadside standing agape, when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me (the beggar girl) from the dust, and set at thy side this ragged beggar girl a-tremble with shame and pride, like a creeper in a summer breeze".[1]

With the Lord's grace obtained finally, he assumes an epitome of perfection which Wordsworth sings in his memorable words:

> " A being breathing thoughtful breath,
> A traveller between life and death :
> The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill."[2]

A noble vision of life opens up to him with a reverence for duty as "the stern daughter of the voice of God" in preference to personal enjoyments. He seems to feel "the very pulse of the machine". The sacrifices performed by him in obedience to the injuctions of the Vedas have now helped him obtain the sense of the sacrifice of his personal pleasure for a common good. The right tone of prayer is built up for him. He loves morality and would perform his duty, howsoever irksome it would be; for he recognises the sacredness of duty to resist evil. He feels in his being the presence of a strong will which can stand him in good stead in the fiercest of temptations and trials to let him carry out his 'aught', which another, made of a lesser stuff, has not the strength to do. He becomes a proper receptacle of the noble Vedic instruction of the S'.Y.S. A. 40 or the Īśa Upaniṣad that only Paramātmā has His residence, as its inner controller, in whatever phenomenon he experiences and that the universe, sentient and insentient, therefore, should be thought of only as Paramātmā (Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam) who is his own Ātmā. That becomes now his creed. Whatever he sees and hears and can build a notion of is, therefore, he thinks, only the Lord Himself who is his own Ātmā. Where else then would he fly except in the orbit of his Master, who is both this objective universe and a thinker of that universe (the Kṣetra and the Kṣetrajña) ? For such a regenerated and disciplined person is the seer's injunction in the S'.Y.S. A. 40 that he must enjoy the objects of senses with a sense of restraint and renunciation (Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ) and never covet anybody else's wealth and possessions (Mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvit dhanam).

Such is the social order that is proposed to be set up by the philosophy of the Yajurveda to which its last chapter is devoted and which is the subject-matter of the Īśa Upaniṣad too. This is the ruling sentiment with which Ācārya Vinobajī contemplates the regeneration of the world-society today by ruling out the passion for possessions, which is rampant in individuals and nations that are wedded to imperialistic modes of life. This is the gist of the philosophy which the great father of the Indian nation, Mahātmā Gandhi, tried to inculcate in the minds of the people. This is the sovereign mandate that Bhagavān Buddha gave in his noble precepts[3] to Bhāradvāja in the Manasā Grāma in the Kosala Province with an emphasis on Maitrī (friendship), Karuṇā (compassion), Muditā (Joy) and Upekṣā (ignoring the scandal-mongers), which alone befriend man with the universe and point to the realest world of Brahman. For, said the Lord, they truly uproot Kāmacchanda (passion), Vyāpāda (enmity), Styānmruddha (torpor), Auddhatya Kaukṛtya (agony of repentance) and Vicikitsā (doubt). With these qualities alone, said he. man could be relieved of mental tortures and could obtain a composed, pleased mind. With these qualities alone, preached Lord Buddha to Ambaṣṭa Māṇavaka and to his teacher Pauṣkarasāti in the Icchānangal Grāma, man could be steadied in thought with a disciplined, pure mind that gives him a refreshed, divine vision of the creatures of this earth—a vision that is rid of the hauteur of superiority of family, caste and achievements. Through such discipline alone, said the Tathāgata to Mahānāma S'ākya, can mind leave desiring and be freed from the reproaches of wrongful acts coming in its wake ; for that mind abandons avarice, enmity and infatuation and holds out in bold relief the state of peace and freedom, so glaringly distinguished from the state of passion and bondage.

If a man but once tastes the joy of this state of peace resulting from the sense of renunciation, he would never head on to the blind furies of desires, that alone are responsible for the destruction of fraternal love between man and man. In this very body would then be realised the true goal of human life and its truthful values. Life then becomes a field of morality and religion that take their rise not from dogmas but from friendly hearts. Life then becomes invested with the halo of enthusiasm and progress and is prostrate in one salutation before the Creator and Distributor of cosmic wealth. Mind naturally knows then what the true connotation of Tapa (penance) is with its faith grounded in love for life, wherever it is found. Different nations on different soils are then recognised as but the offspring of one Creator, bound by the mutual ties of fraternal love. Then the human world becomes a family in which the implications of family affections are implicit.

The sense of Christian charity too is understood only on the background of renunciation as also the following Lord Jesus Christ's sermon[4] on the mount to his disciples :

> "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
> "Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.
> "Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.
> "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.
> "Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.
> "Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.
> "Blessed are the peace-makers : for they shall be called the children of God.
> "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
> "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

What is the paramount understanding of the mind to which the sermon points ? It is the renunciation advocated by the Īśa

Upaniṣad. It is only that sense in man that lets him undertake voluntary poverty and meekness for the realisation of the spiritual values of life. Strong mercy is wrought in him only with that sense, when he sees the down-trodden groan under the weight of their insufferable lot at the hands of exploiters. He consequently becomes pure and righteous and turns out to be a peace-maker between the haughty victors and their bleeding victims. His persecution is but history.

A person becomes a real Brāhmaṇa in the opinion of Lord Buddha only with that discipline of restraining his mind from coveting things that tempt it (Yadā nisedho manaso piye hi) and with peace that comes to it exactly in proportion to his aversion for acts of violence which, we know, are consequent upon coveting. It is neither the high family nor the matted hair, symbolic of the order of a holy recluse, that declares him a pure Brāhmaṇa, says the Lord, but the observance of Truth and Law (Saccañ ca dhammo ca), which, we know, is the observance of restraint and renunciation. The abandonment of worldly possessions and of craving for them (Akiñcanam anādānam); the cutting away of lust (Chetvā nandim); the strength of fortitude (Khantībalam) and rectitude (Sīlavatnam) and self-control (Dantam); a contended life (Appiccham); the refraining from using the rod on creatures (Nidhāya daṇḍam bhūtesu); the disregard for worldly and heavenly enjoyments (Hitvā mānusakaṁ yogaṁ dibbaṁ yogam upaccagā), and immunity obtained in this manner from evil (Nahātakam) make a man a true Brāhmaṇa in the opinion of Bhagavān Buddha.[5] But such a condition arises for him, only when he becomes a friend of the universe with a mind whose crudities are consumed in the fire of renunciation—the one quality held out by the philosophy of the Yajurveda for man to endeavour for and achieve.

But a question here arises as to what is the training ground for such discipline in life. It is surely the home and society. Mahātmā Gandhi uuderwent the rigour of fasting and celibacy at home to cultivate restraint and renunciation and exemplified it in his Āśramas in Africa and India; and his noble example and prayers led the inmates of the Tolstoy Āśrama in Africa to keep religious fasts and become restrained. But the fasting is efficacious, says the Mahātmājī, only when it is undertaken with the aim of the purification of mind. He says, "If the mind does not fast along with the body, fasting becomes a pretence and is injurious."[6] He adds, "Although I have shown a close connection of the nature of food and fasting with the observance of celibacy, it is certain that celibacy depends chiefly on mental discipline. Impure mind does not become purified by fasting and the nature of food makes no effect on such a mind. The impurities of the mind are washed away only with disciplined thinking, with meditation on God and with His grace. But the mind is closely connected with the body. An impure mind seeks impure food and the relish of various dishes and enjoyments, which again reflect their effects on the mind. It is for this reason and in that proportion that the necessity of restraint on food-taking and of fasting arises. A filthy mind obeys the body and the senses instead of controlling them, and therefore also it if necessary for the body to fast occasionally and to take only such food as is pure and is limited in quantity of the stuff that is so the least passion-inflaming nature. So, those that say that a man of restraint has no need of fasting or of knowing the limits of food are as much mistaken as those that believe that the quality of food and fasting are the be-all and end-all of restraint. My own experience teaches me that the man whose mind desires restraint is assisted, in a large measure, by the appropriate quantity and quality of food and by fasting, and that mental purity appears to be impossible without them."[7]

It is absolutely necessary, in these days of simulation of restraint, to enter into Mahātmā Gandhi's analysis of the physical association of that rare virtue with the observance of the most essential discipline of the body, for he is the idol of renunciation in modern Bhārata. It would also not be out of place to say to a heedless modern non-vegetarian that there are people who would refuse to take the food of a wrong kind even at the peril of losing their lives. Mother Kasturba is an example to the point. When she was in Durban, undergoing treatment for menorrhagia, she underwent an operation and was so enfeebled that the doctor thought it absolutely necessary to give her mutton-soup and beef-tea to sustain her strength. She was clearly given to understand that refusing them would endanger her life. But what was the reaction of Kasturba to that suggestion ? She said to Gandhiji in most unequivocal terms, "I do not want to take the mutton-soup. A Jīvātmā does not often take on the human body. I do not mind dying in your lap, but I shall not pollute my body with the mutton-soup." And she undertook a fatiguing journey from Durban to Phoenix. When lectured to by a revered Swāmī on the peremptory need of that non-vegetarian diet to prop up her enfeebled body, she said firmly, "Swāmījī, you may say as you like, but I do not want to be cured, if the mutton-soup is the remedy. I shall thank you, if you stop oppressing my mind with your precepts. You may talk out things leisurely with the father of my children (Gandhiji) later on. I have made my determination known to you."[8] The pure are made of such heroic stuff.

With such purity of heart and sympathetic understanding of life as are obtained with the realisation of the universe as a holy field for Karmayoga (dutiful observance of the life of action), man should grow desireless, instructs the Vedic seer of the Īśa Upaniṣad, and perform holy actions to achieve eternal release. He may thus desire to live a full span of life of a hundred years; but, says the seer, that life of action would never put him in bondage (Na karma lipyate nare). That is the seer's deliberate opinion. The Yajurveda enjoins upon man the Karmayoga of this character. The Bhagavad Gītā tells us, in support of a life lived in such Karmayoga, that actionlessness does not ensure man release from the phenomenal values of life; for he unconsciously acts (Kāryate hyavaśaḥ karma) all the time in life in conformity with the settled Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika modes of his Prakṛti (nature). It is a foolish plan of life, therefore, says Lord Kṛṣṇa, for man to give meaningless discipline to the organs of action, while he sits on brooding over the objects of enjoyment with an undisciplined mind. The right method, in His opinion, is to regulate thinking, discipline the senses of knowledge and act without desiring the fruit of actions. The right course that He advocates is that what is to be done should be done, and the right understanding which He holds out is that the life of action is certainly superior to a dull life of indolence. Again, an inactive man, He says, can never run the course of his life (S'arīrayātrāpi ca te na prasidhyed akarmaṇaḥ). It is, therefore, S'rī Kṛṣṇa's instruction to Arjuna that he should hold duty as sacred and perform it with the sense of sacrifice without being immersed in the slough of attachment to work for fruit (Muktasaṅgaḥ samācara). He says that only gratifications received by a person without the sense of sacrifice put him in thraldom, and not the work done as a matter of duty.[9]

This idea of the dignity of the desireless, holy life of Karmayoga of the Yajurveda is beautifully worked up by Rabindranath Tagore in Gītāñjali against the background of the picture of a man who is ignominously steeped in sensuous pleasures. A person whose life is dedicated to the pleasures of senses is conceived as a prisoner and the poet gives the genesis of his life in chains. Such a prisoner is asked, "Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you ?" "It was my master," said the prisoner. "I thought I could outdo everybody in the world in wealth and power, and I amassed in my own treasure-house the money due to my king. When sleep overcame me I lay upon the bed that was for my lord, and on waking up I found I was a prisoner in my own treasure-house." He is asked again, "Prisoner, tell me, who was it that wrought this unbreakable chain ?" "It was I", said the prisoner, "who forged this chain very carefully. I thought my invincible power would hold the world captive leaving me in a freedom undisturbed. Thus night and day I worked at the chain with huge fires and cruel hard strokes. When at last the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip."[10]

And Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals this very idea of bondage in the Bhagavad Gītā when he says to Arjuna that, when men seek only personal pleasures without thinking of their obligations to other creatures and to God, they court sin (Bhuñjate te tvaghaṁ pāpāḥ ye pacantyātmakāraṇāt) and that such revellers in the luxury of a sinful life live only fruitless lives (Aghāyur indriyārāmo moghaṁ pārtha sa jīvati). The Lord quotes the example of the detached king Janaka who obtained life's noblest fulfilment by doing actions for the good of humanity (Lokasaṅgraham eva) and exhorts Arjuna to imitate him. He gives Arjuna to understand plainly that He has not to obtain anything that is not already obtained by Him, and yet He acts. Giving a reason for that life of action, He says that, if He does not do His work and sinks into lethargy, man would copy Him with the result that all these worlds would stop functioning (Utsīdeyur ime lokā na kuryāṁ karma ced aham), and that He would be the harbinger of confusion and chaos (Saṅkarasya ca kartā syām). He would be, for that matter, He says, the annihilator of creatures (Upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ). S'ri Kṛṣṇa specifies those persons who cherish specific fruits for their specific actions, born of desire, as foolish, and those that act with the goal of helping the cause of humanity's progress (Cikīrṣur lokasaṅgraham) as wise. Lord Kṛṣṇa, therefore, wants man to know His considered opinion that the wise should live the life of action of a philanthropic character and set a right example for men of the common rut, devoted to life's mad hurry, instead of misleading them by talking of actionlessness and false peace. He substantiates His argument by saying that incessant activity proceeds all over the universe as the result of the operation of the three Guṇas of Prakṛti (Nature) and that only the deluded self of ego in man arrogates that activity to itself. The philosopher who knows this truth of cosmic activity, says He, does not get entrenched in it (Guṇā guṇeṣu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate). The right plan of life for man, therefore, as advocated by the Bhagavad Gītā, is to dedicate all his work at the feet of Paramātmā with complete self-surrender and push on intrepidly in the discharge of his duty.[11] This is the creed of the Karmayoga enunciated by the Yajurveda and perfected by the Bhagavad Gītā.

But what is implied in such dedication? Only that a philosopher throws down his mask of ego and, thinking all work co-existing with phenomena that arise from the reflection (Tapa) of the immortal Puruṣa as sacred, does it for work's sake in a spirit of sacrifice (Yajñabhāva). The satisfaction received by the person in this scheme of doing work is the satisfaction received by life in general, phenomenal and divine, as it proceeds with the equitable distribution of the wealth of the universe. There is again no breath of pollution in his life, while the life of an unenlightened person is roughly the fabric woven of desire—of lust and greed (Kāma)—and exasperation (Krodha) when thwarted in his ignoble purpose. A sensible man also understands well the subtle working of the senses of knowledge and, therefore, trains them to proceed towards their objects under the wise direction of his disciplined mind, which is subtler than they. And for obtaining the right discipline of his mind, he aims at the purification of his intellect which is the subtlest of his human heritage. He is trying in that way to deal a death blow to desire (Kāma) which has originated the whole show of the universe. And he wants to come back in that way to the self of genuine knowledge (Pāramārthika jñāna) by shunning the ways of desire that appears to engulf man forcibly, as it were (Balād iva niyojitaḥ), in its constitution of unsatiated hunger and endless refuelling consequent upon it (Mahāśanaḥ).[12]

The S'.Y.S. A. 40 or the Īśa Upaniṣad, anticipating these conclusions of the Bhagavad Gītā, therefore, instructs that those persons, that follow this track of desire on earth (Ātmahano janāḥ) and desiring its culmination in heaven offer material sacrifices of the desiring (Kāmya) character to diverse deities, are plunged in pitch darkness and that, grovelling in it in life, obtain it even after death to continue their blind course of transmigration. The obtaining of the non-dual self of immortal Ātmā is the Vedic goal for man, for obtaining which Tapa (purity and reflection), S'raddhā (faith) and Brahmacarya (life in Brahman) are prescribed. Inscrutable are the ways of his destiny and shrouded in mystery are his final achievements; the Vedas, therefore, enjoin upon him a code of worship like the Agnihotra as obligatory (Nityayajña) and differentiated from the Yajñas of the desiring (Kāmya) type. He is with his Agni, symbolic of Brahman, in that way and the worship breathes purification in him, while he is actively engaged in his field of duty as a householder (Gṛhapati) in society. He prays that way, reveres his parents and preceptors (Matṛdevo bhava, Pitṛdevo bhava, Ācāryadevo bhava) and extends his hospitality to the wide world by treating even his guests as divinities (Atithidevo bhava).[13] What a noble Vedic discipline it is that expands the Yajamāna's field in that manner in the love of all and makes him consider his individual life as only secondary in the divine plan of the fraternal federation of all humanity! He makes ascension to nobler worlds, while going along the Arcirmārga (path of illumination) after death in consequence of such a life of philanthropy and prayer lived on earth during his life-time, and attains at last the imortal Puruṣa for endless peace.

Those sacrificers, however, that have obtained the pleasures of the paradise with the performance of the Yajñas of the desiring nature (Kāmya) are said to return to this earth[14] to live the life of Karmayoga for the correct understanding of the significance of human life before attaining the immortal, supreme Puruṣa. The Bhagavad Gītā is specific upon this point and it holds that, only when work is done with the light of reason (Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam) and without care for fruit (Mā karmaphalahetur bhūḥ), it is emancipating.

But a man has to obtain the status of a steady mind (Sthitaprajña) to realise this Yoga of non-attachment to fruit, wading through the ocean of life and work and death, and reach also at the same time the highest aim of his life consisting in the attainment of his immortal Ātmā. He has necessarily to attain the spiritual placidity of mind (Adhyātmanityāḥ) to reach that goal; for only such a mind lets him progressively abandon his conceit (Māna) and his age-long bewilderment of attachment that is built up while his senses have contacted their objects (Jitasaṅgadoṣāḥ).[15] This immortal Ātmā, says the Vedic seer of the S′.Y.S. A. 40, is steady and uniform (Anejat) such as the senses of knowledge can never reach (Nainad devā āpnuvan); for that supreme consciousness is rather the ancient background (Pūrvamarśat), stationed on which the senses and the mind function. Yet that immobile Ātmā is described by the Vedic seer to be swifter than the swiftest idea of the mind (Manaso javīyaḥ), and we are told that Mātariśvā or Sūtrātmā (the cosmic Prāṇa) upholds Karma (activity) in such Ātmā, which transcends all the phenomena that It pervades. The seer describes the sovereign Ātmā by contrasts and declares that, though motionless, It has motion, is both far and near, and is inside and outside all. The Bhagavad Gītā supports this Vedic conception of Ātmā by giving a picture, in contrasts, of that beginingless Entity (Anādimat), which is said to be neither manifest (Sat) nor non-manifest (Asat). Although that Ātmā, says the Gītā, has the semblance of the qualities of all the senses, It is devoid of them and, though appearing to nourish all as qualified, It is attached to none and is qualityless. The Gītā too describes, as the Yajurveda does, that Ātmā as both inside and outside the created beings, as both motionless and moving, and as far and near at the same time. Despite Its uniformity and indivisibility, the Gītā says, this Ātmā stands as if divided and is the originator (Prabhaviṣṇu), the upholder (Bhūtabhartu) and the destroyer of creatures (Grasiṣṇu). And the Gītā declares finally that It is the supreme of all illuminations beyond the regions of darkness and is at once the object of knowledge, the knowledge itself and the act of knowledge, stationed in the hearts of all (Hṛdi sarvasya dhiṣṭhitam).[16]

The Vedic seer of the S′.Y.S. A. 40, knowing this truth that Ātmā is all this universe of experience and its Knower, therefore, instructs that the person, who sees all creatures as only participating in that uniformly one Ātmā, as he himself does, and who sees only that one Ātmā informing all, has all his doubts resolved (Tato na vicikitsati) in regard to the conception of the phenomenal existence that looks so poignantly diverse to one who has not realised Ātmā's sovereign sway and uniform pervasion. There is no oppression, the seer avers, of delusion and grief (Tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śokaḥ) left for this knower of Reality with his conviction that all beings are one Ātmā (Ekatvam anupaśyataḥ). This Ātmā is known to the Vedic seer as refulgent (S′ukram), bodiless (Akāyam), woundless (Avraṇam), muscleless (Asnāviram) and pure such as sin can never corrupt (S′uddham apāpaviddham), and is recognised as omniscient (Kaviḥ), all-intelligent (Manīṣī) and self-existing (Svayambhūḥ), pervading all and above all (Paribhūḥ). It is also understood by him as upholding all things —all objects of senses — in their adequate significance for the use of all for endless time. And the person who has reached consummation, says the seer, obtains that Ātmā (Sa paryagāt).

If the supreme Ātmā is thus conceived by the S′.Y.S. A. 40, it would be most instructive at this stage to know for a comparative survey what the Upaniṣads tell us about the supreme status of this Ātmā and how a Jīvātmā, in its course of transmigration, becomes progressively aware of It in the changeful scenes of life with understanding — the understanding which Kant reveals as guided by the pure conceptions of the synthesis which we recognise as Ātmā in the language of the Vedānta and of the S.Y.S. A. 40 under review.

The sage Yājñavalkya instructs in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad that Ātmā is, by Its very nature, devoid of desire and grief (Akāmaḥ, S′okāntaraḥ), but that It resembles the senses of knowledge, mind, life and the elements ; It resembles light and non-light, desire and non-desire, anger and non-anger, virtue and non-virtue for realisation by a person according to his work and conduct. Yājñavalkya summarises that a person becomes saintly by living a noble, pure life (Sādhukārī sādhur bhavati) and sinful by living a sinful life (Pāpakārī pāpo bhavati). The person has a free will to choose his courses and can elect either. His determination is motivated by that selection and he acts, Yājñavalkya says, as he resolves (Yatkratur bhavati tat karma kurute) and reaps the fruit of his work (Yat karma kurute tad abhi sampadyate). He is said to wander from this world to the next and back to this world, experiencing such life as his life of desire dictates. But Yājñavalkya concludes in the end that, if he has no desire left in him (Akāmaḥ) and yearns only for the realisation of Ātmā (Ātmakāmaḥ), there is nothing left of his subtle body (Prāṇaḥ) to depart on his death to take on a new body and continue his course of transmigration, but that, being even as Brahman in life, he attains Brahman on death (Brahmaiva san Brahmāpyeti).[17]

The supremely blissful and omnipotent status of Ātmā is further revealed in the discussion between the learned Gārgī of the Upaniṣadic fame and the sage Yājñavalkya in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Gārgī asks Yājñavalkya as to upon what are woven and interwoven (Otam ca protam ca) all these heavens and the earth, what is above the heavens (Ūrdhvaṁ divaḥ) and below the earth (Arvāk pṛthivyāḥ) and between them, and all this time—past, present and future. The sage replies that they are all woven and interwoven on the space (Ākāśe). When Gārgī next asks him upon what is the space woven and interwoven, the sage specifies it as the Imperishable (Akṣara Ātmā) at whose bidding (Etasya vā Akṣarasya praśāsane) the sun and the moon stand upheld in their respective spheres (Sūryācandramasau vidhṛte tiṣṭhataḥ) and time operates.[18] The bliss experienced by the sinless and desireless knower of this Akṣara Ātmā is declared by Yājñavalkya as supreme, in consideration with which the bliss experienced in the worlds of the human beings, of the Gandharvas, of the gods and of Prajāpati is said to be immaterial.[19]

And there does arise an opportunity for man to realise this

Ātmā, because he shares Its immortal nature as a Jīvātmā as much as he shares the changeful, perishable nature of phenomena, whose product he is as a body. The Jīvātmā continues its identity in transmigration in spite of its inhabiting different gross bodies in different incarnations which it takes in proportion to its merit of work and knowledge (Yathā karma yathā śrutam).[20] The Jīvātmā makes perceptions with senses, experiences objects, and forms ideas and conceptions, intellectual and ethical, with the mind to act in unison with the body in the objective world. Acts and thoughts, therefore, constitute the field of the Jīvātmā. But we should first understand what is the Jīvabhāva of a Jīvātmā. The Jīvabhāva can be understood as the subtle body (Liṅga śarīra) of a person made up of the mental impressions left by his acts and thoughts on the mind which is said to accompany the Prāṇa that leaves the body on death. Man's Prāṇa with Prajña, which is the complex of impressions, conceptual and conative and volitional, can, therefore, rightly be said to constitute this Liṅga S'arīra or the Jīvabhāva, which migrates from life to life, feeding on ever new conceptions of life in ever new environments in the universe. It devises modes of enjoying the universe and either advances, profiting by experiences, or gets retarded on the physical, intellectual and spiritual planes, though, broadly speaking, advancement is the general plan. There is no cessation of births and deaths for man until the genuine nature of Ātmā is revealed to him. The Liṅga S'arīra is dissolved and ceases to exist only with that revelation. And this revelation of the nature of Ātmā is one of refulgence, omniscience, and endless pervasion and bliss as the S'.Y.S. A. 40 and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad declare.

For such a product of matter, life, mind and spirit as man then, what could be a better instruction leading to that goal than one that wants him to understand life in its relative perspectives on the physical, the intellectual and the spiritual planes? The physical (Annarasamayaḥ), the vital (Prāṇamayaḥ), the mental (Manomayaḥ) and the intellectual (Vijñānamayaḥ) counterparts of the blissful, immortal Puruṣa (Ānandamayaḥ) are there for him, as he yet counts his existence as an entity separated from all others. For such a person, understanding should be clear that Ātmā is indeed the essential and eternal background, on which the panorama of life stretches out with the scenes of phenomena ever arising and disappearing according to the very necessity of its (life's) changeful constitution. The scenes have got to be greeted as such only—as only changeful. It can never be that they could be denied in their phenomenal aspects ; for they do carry their strength and fulfilment. They can be intuited, as Kant says, under the categories of the understanding—quantitatively as a series of unity, plurality and totality and qualitatively as reality, negation and limitation under the relation of inherence and subsistence, of causality and dependence and of community. Possibility and impossibility, existence and non-existence, and necessity and contingence are specified as their modes of procedure. Thus understanding, Kant believes, can collect the phenomenal experiences under these 'pure conceptions of the synthesis which the understanding contains a priori'. And what is this synthesis ? The synthesis, adverted to, is the synthesis which, to quote Kant again, 'generally speaking, is . . . . the mere operation of the imagination—a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no cognition whatever, but of the working of which we are seldom even conscious. But to reduce this synthesis to conceptions, is a function of the understanding, by means of which we attain to cognition, in the proper meaning of the term.'[21] This is the psychological basis of the experience of the world of objects.

Now, to explain the experiencing of the objective world physiologically, we say that the objects out there in the universe carry stimuli to the senses and the stimuli are conveyed as neural messages to the brain, where a mystery happens that makes the objects perceived, although the nerve-messages are certainly not of the stuff of the objects themselves. How it all happens is a mystery ; the objects are perceived consciously, all the same, and we have their cognition. But there exactly does the question arise as to what is that uniform something—the highest synthesis—in man that does not change, while understanding assigns room to diverse conceptions of diverse objects as beads on a thread that runs throughout the beads. Kant has recognised it as "a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no cognition whatever", but fails to account for its conscious knowledge. What is indeed that uniform something on the background of which the association of the like and that of the unlike and their reciprocal dissociation are rendered possible, investigated into and their bearings clearly understood ? On whose one uniformity are the results of different investigations scrutinized, and laws, operating in the universe, formulated ? If there is no such permanent, steady background — if there are only the passing phases of phenomena and moods without such a background as the Buddha Vijñānavādīs say —, where remains the possibility of the understanding of the past and the present behaviour of the phenomena investigated into, that prediction could be made about their behaviour in a particular manner in future ? That is the crux of the problem.

It is idle again to say that the objects of senses are illusory. The truth is rather that their existence is relative ; and if their relative existence of a changeful, fleeting disposition be admitted and clearly understood on the background of the beginningless, immortal Ātmā, they cannot compel a person with such knowledge to grieve when their pleasing contact is ended, and elate him when the contact begins. Surely they cannot then force him to fly in a rage when their uncongenial aspects are contacted, and make him evoke piteous lamentations while they operate. For he knows that things and circumstances and moods, good and bad, favourable and unfavourable, pleasing and painful must come and go — that they must alternate. A person with proper discrimination, therefore, takes things philosophically and, in his wisdom, is always prepared to meet them both and throw them courageously behind his supreme consciousness, the Ātmā, that he eternally is. He is prepared for all contingencies — for opulence and poverty, for fame and ignominy, for friends and foes, for life and death ; for he knows, above all, that he is essentially the Ātmā that is of the imperishable nature. He takes his transmigration easily and as a matter of necessity, so long as there exists in him the least little craving for the pleasures of the senses. He is conscious of his desires, but he has a will to be desireless. He has also with him a well chalked out programme to attain the state of perfection of a Jīvanmukta, which must bring him the eternal bliss of emancipation from all the relative values of life. He, with his awareness of his immortal Ātmā, knows that these relative values have their compelling force for him so long only as he is conscious of time, but that they are, in his highest state of timeless existence, understood only as such stuff as dreams are made of. And if he has willed a return to his native state as Ātmā after death, it shall even so happen and he shall be beyond the reach of changeful phenomena.

To create this understanding in man — we now return to the Īśa Upaniṣad or the S'.Y.S. A. 40 that is the nerve-centre of the Yajurveda —, the Vedic seer instructs that those persons who glorify the changeful aspect of life (Asambhutim upāsate) without confidence in the immortality of Ātmā obtain dense darkness; but that denser darkness obtain they that are wedded only to the belief of the immortal Ātmā (Sambhūtyām ratāḥ) and are careless towards the relative truths of life on earth. Both the beliefs, taken separately, do not carry full truth in the Vedic seer's opinion ; for the wise, he says, tell of their different fruits. Under these circumstances, the seer instructs, when both the beliefs are brought within the ken of understanding and acted upon by a person so as to evoke their co-ordinated and constructive response from life lived in general, that is his happy state of harmony on earth. He does not then grieve, when he is overtaken by death ; for, he knows for certain that death must come, but that it must carry him to the immortal bliss of Ātmā, untainted anymore with the changeful and grievous aspects of life in the world of matter where his lot was cast. The seer further says by way of consolidating this instruction that those persons who offer worship exclusively with the object of attaining the joys of the paradise (Avidyām upāsate) enter dense darkness, but that in denser darkness are immersed they that give up sacred work and duty on earth in the thought of immortal Ātmā (Vidyāyāṁ ratāḥ) ; for the wise, he says, mention the different fruits of both these beliefs. The seer, therefore, advises a course of harmony in which both are welded together, where the joys of the paradise are deemed as terminating and therefore not the sole object of endeavour for man, and where he has his vision opened through knowledge and right discipline in life for obtaining the immortal Ātmā (Amṛtam aśnute) where all transmigration ends.

We have already seen that transmigration is for the Jīvabhāva of Ātmā and the Jīvabhāva or the Liṅg śarīra (subtle body) has already been explained ; but it should be understood in its truest propriety. We must know what exactly are the gross and subtle forces, by reflecting on which the immortal Ātmā gets the Jīvabhāva. They are said to be the sixteen parts (Ṣoḍaśakalāḥ) of the Supreme Soul. Bhagavān Pippalāda explains to Sukeśa, the son of Bharadvāja, these sixteen constituents. The Praśnopaniṣad relates this instruction. The sage says that Puruṣa (the Supreme Soul) abides in the space of the heart and that these sixteen parts operate for Him, while He is in an embodied state. The sage tells Sukeśa by way of explanation that the Supreme Soul once reflected, "What is it that departs from the body which is construed as my departure and what is it that stays in the body which means my stay?" So, the sage continues, the Supreme Soul created Life (Prāṇa) and, from Life, He further created faith (Sraddhā), the sky (Kham), the air (Vāyu), the light (Jyoti), the waters (Āpaḥ), the earth (Pṛthivī), the sense-organs (Indriyam), the mind (Manaḥ), food (Annam), semen (Vīryam), penance (Tapaḥ), holy instruction (Mantrāḥ), work (Karma), worlds (Lokāḥ) and name (Nāma) in the worlds. And Pippalāda explains that, just as rivers flowing towards the sea have their namms and forms destroyed (Bhidyete tāsāṁ nāmarūpe) when they meet the sea and what remains is only the sea, in the same way, these sixteen parts of the witnessing Supreme Puruṣa (Paridraṣṭuḥ), going towards Hīm (Puruṣāyaṇāḥ), have their separate names and forms destroyed when they reach Hīm (Puruṣaṁ prāpyās taṁ gacchanti bhidyete tāsāṁ nāmarūpe) and what remains is only the immortal Supreme Puruṣa who is without these sixteen parts (Puruṣa ityevaṁ procyate sa eṣo kalo mṛto bhavati).[22]

This instruction of the sage Pippalāda gives us a clear picture of the gross and subtle forces of Vidyā and Avidyā that stand united to make Puruṣa incarnate. If a wise man, therefore, succeeds in understanding the spiritual plan of life wherein both Vidyā and Avidyā stand co-ordinated to let him emerge triumphant, then he knows, declares the S.'Y.S. A. 40, that his Prāṇa (life) shall be ultimately united with the immortal cosmic Prāṇa (Anilam amṛtam) and that his gross body would eventually return to dust. Under these certain circumstances, the Vedic seer instructs such a person, high up in the scale of evolution, to remember "Aum", the dearest and most significant name of the Supreme Puruṣa or Paramātmā, at the approach of ḍeath. That would, he thinks, help him obtain the holy world which he cherishes dearly. And, while the memory of the life lived by him on earth continues mounting up to his consciousness before he becomes finally unconscious, the seer advises him to cling to the gracious Lord's most beautiful name "Aum", that his final barriers may fall away.

Such is the instruction of the seer to the adorer who is making his way through the dim struggle of life. The adorer, however, has worshipped Agni during his life time and has understood Agni's progressive connotation as a purifier of life—as the Supreme Puruṣa. The seer of the Mantra 16 of the S'.Y.S. A. 40, therefore, advises him to pray to that Agni to lead him by the one path of illumination (Supathā) for granting him the wealth of the spirit (Rāye) ; for Agni surely, says the seer, has the fullest knowledge of all the ways and can lead the worshipful man by the most benign way that is competent to let him emerge as pure Ātmā. The seer wants him to pray that Agni disentangle him from the shackles of his sins (Yuyodhyasmajjuhurāṇam enaḥ), and asks him to repeat his prayer with salutations offered to Agni again and again.

And surely we shall all join in that sublime prayer, even though we may not apprehend the immediate approach of death, when the facts of life are that the body of man is the cover that conceals within it the Puruṣa who is the one Truth, and the golden disc of Āditya (Sun) is the cover that hides within it the Puruṣa who is the one Truth (Satya) where Agni leads the evolved. Again, the Puruṣas, concealed in both, the seer of the S'.Y.S. A. 40 M.17 assures us, are only the one immortal, Supreme Puruṣa or the most auspicious (Kalyāṇatama) Ātmā and would be understood as such, if only the covers melt away to reveal the identity to a spiritual vision of Truth (Satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye) and let that Life of Truth be lived in. Aum.

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Hymns from the Vedas

Abinash Chandra Bose

THE VEDAS, the source-books of Indian culture and religion, belong to remote antiquity. Just for this reason there is a tendency among scholars to think more of their anthropological significance than of their poetic or religious appeal. No serious attempt has been made to examine the traditional Indian claim that the moral and spiritual life of the people is rooted in them. Vedic selections have usually been made with a view to acquainting the student with the vocabulary and grammar of the language rather than with their emotional and spiritual content. This, certainly, is very unfair treatment for this noble literary heritage of the world.

In this book an attempt has been made to bring together representative hymns from all the four Vedas. In order to place them in the proper perspective from the religious point of view, the author has classified them in the manner of the *Bhagavad Gita* into five *yogas* or ways of approach in religion. These are—*Jnanayoga,* the Path of Knowledge, *Karmayoga,* the Path of Action, *Bhaktiyoga,* the Path of Devotion, *Vibhutiyoga,* the Path of Splendour (approaching the Divine through the glory of the universe), and *Rajayoga,* the Mystical Path. Two more sections have been added, one on Death, giving the Vedic attitude towards it (which greatly differs from later attitudes) and the other on the Earth, comprising the long hymn of sixty-three stanzas in the *Atharva Veda,* which illustrates the Vedic poet's zest for life with deep attachment to spiritual values.

The original Vedic text has also been given alongside the translation. The author has been guided in his translation by the work of orientalists, eastern and western. Unlike many of them the author shows no preoccupation with the external forms and rituals of Vedic worship. His emphasis is on the poetic and spiritual values, on the inner life of the people and on their contact with the realities of material existence. His Introduction highlights the Vedic ideals which have been a living force in India for countless generations.

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